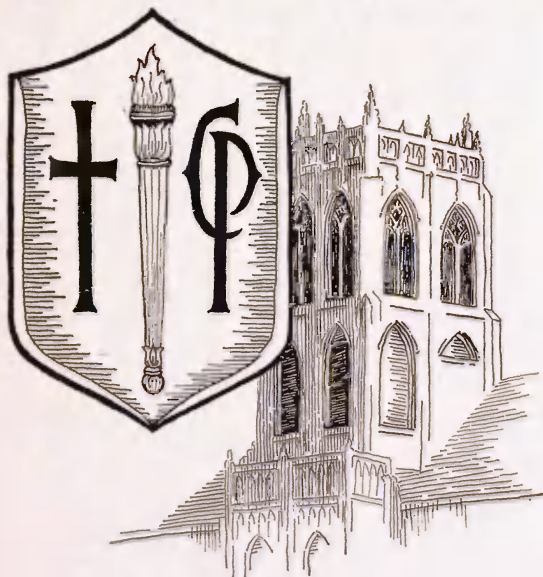


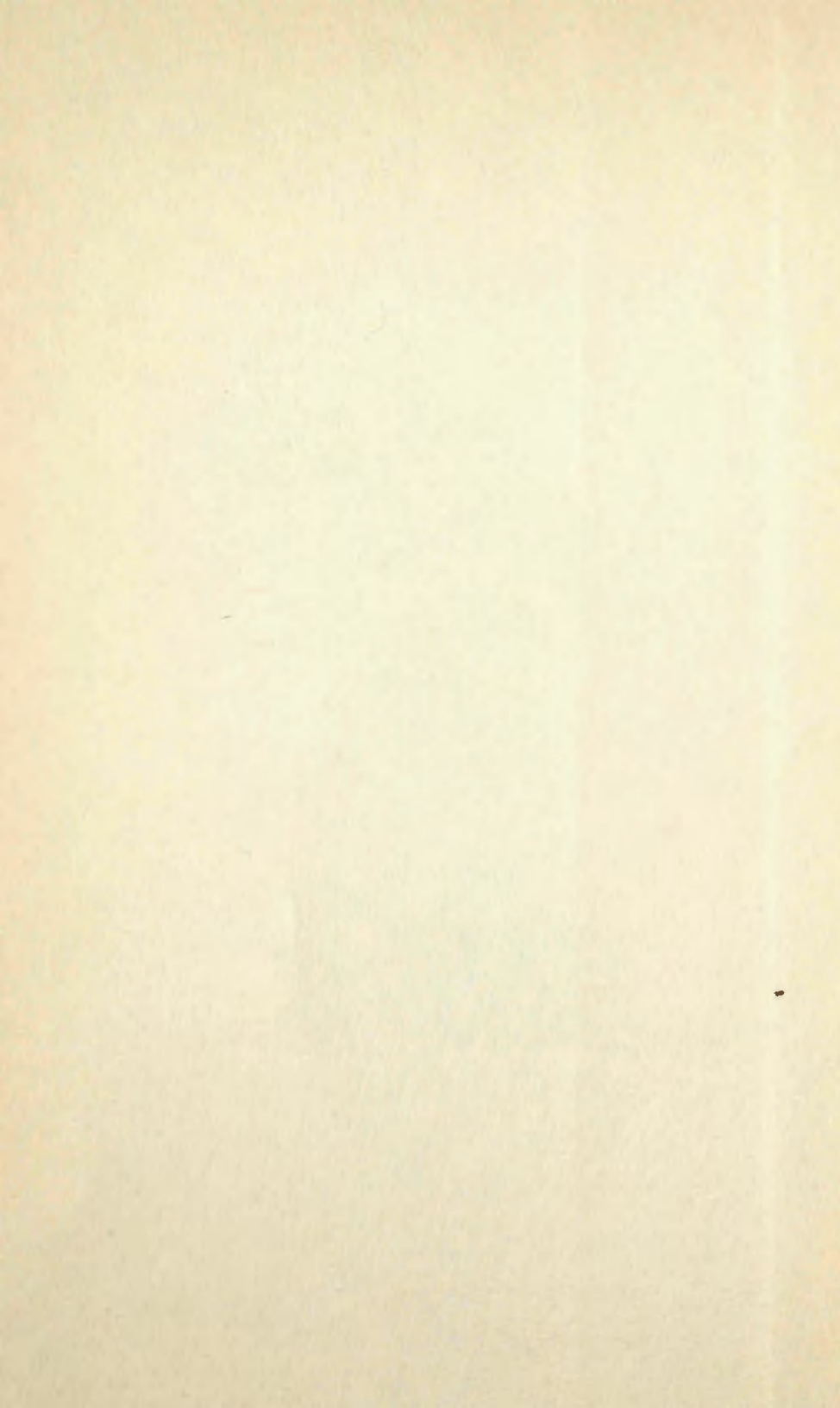
THE ARCHIVE



THE
THREE HALF-MOONS
F. W. BOREHAM



COLLEGE
OF THE PACIFIC



BOOKS BY MR. BOREHAM

A BUNCH OF EVERLASTINGS
A CASKET OF CAMEOS
A FAGGOT OF TORCHES
A HANDFUL OF STARS
A REEL OF RAINBOW
FACES IN THE FIRE
THE CRYSTAL POINTERS
THE GOLDEN MILESTONE
THE HOME OF THE ECHOES
THE LUGGAGE OF LIFE
THE OTHER SIDE OF THE HILL
MOUNTAINS IN THE MIST
MUSHROOMS ON THE MOOR
RUBBLE AND ROSELEAVES
SHADOWS ON THE WALL
THE SILVER SHADOW
THE UTTERMOST STAR
WISPS OF WILDFIRE
A TUFT OF COMET'S HAIR
THE NEST OF SPEARS
A TEMPLE OF TOPAZ
THE FIERY CRAGS

COLLEGE OF THE PACIFIC
Stockton, Calif.

THE THREE HALF-MOONS AND OTHER ESSAYS

rank By
F. W. BOREHAM



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BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

No man writes an *Introduction* for the mere sake of writing an *Introduction*. An *Introduction*—to let the cat out of the bag—is purely an attempt to create an atmosphere. Life is heavily freighted with such ingenious contrivances. The *Introduction* to a book is the author's way of gripping his reader's hand. Nobody has successfully expounded the mystic eloquence of a handshake, yet nobody has seriously questioned its significance and utility.

'Ah,' that eager handshake seems to say, 'this is excellent! Come right in and take the arm-chair yonder! And now, let's overhaul the universe, talking on planets, politics, potatoes, or on anything that comes to mind!'

Having observed, through the medium of an *Introduction*, this pleasant ritual, and having reached so perfect an understanding, let us get on! For it's a long while since we met, and I, at least, have much to say.

FRANK W. BOREHAM.

ARMADALE, VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA.

Easter, 1929.

PART I

I

THE THREE HALF-MOONS

THE Three Half-Moons lie concealed in the valley at the back of Maori Leap. The district, as every visitor to New Zealand knows, is one of the most awe-inspiring and romantic to be found on any continent or island. The eye is bewildered by the cluster of thickly wooded peaks that, crowding closely round and looking sternly down, pour their brawling torrents into the swiftly rushing waters of the Gorge.

Those were great days—the days in which we camped among the giant ferns in the sheltered hollow of Tomahawk Cove. I can feel at this moment the stinging slap with which the mountain winds greeted us, morning by morning, as we emerged from our cozy tents. And there, staring at us from across the stream, was the frowning face of Maori Leap!

Maori Leap is the dizzy height from whose splintered summit the graceful Kahahapa, the daughter of the dreaded war chief, made her never-to-be-forgotten plunge. In a desperate effort to save the life of her lover, Kahahapa found herself hemmed in by his fierce foes, the precipice her only possible retreat. Flashing a look of wild defiance from her

The Three Half-Moons

beautiful black eyes, she sprang like a hunted deer from the lofty cliff, only to be impaled on a score of spears upraised from the canoe below.

To our camp in this outlandish spot, John Broadbanks brought his wife and family that, together, we might share the invigorations and excitements of a glorious month in the wilds. On the evening of which I am thinking, we were shooting down at the Three Half-Moons. The entire party had been out in the boat all day and, after tea, the ladies had reminded us that the cupboard was as bare as old Mother Hubbard's. John and I picked up our guns and set off for the spot at which rabbits were most likely to be found. The Three Half-Moons were hidden by a belt of bush far down in the hollow. The lagoon in the valley ran back into the scrub, forming three crescent bays, and on the green flats that intervened between swamp and forest, the rabbits loved to gambol. We treated the Three Half-Moons as a kind of emergency reserve. At ordinary times we never went near the place. It was convenient to have one spot at which, when the commissariat department was in desperate straits, we could rely upon finding a ready supply.

It was getting dusk and John and I were walking in silence side by side. It was understood between us that we took it in turns to fire. All at once I noticed the head of a rabbit, with ears erect, over the gnarled root of a tree on the fringe of the bush. It was John's turn to fire; so, uncertain as to

whether he also saw it, I touched his shoulder and glanced in the direction of the telltale ears. In a flash the roar of his gun reverberated through the valley and the rabbit frisked away into the undergrowth.

'You missed him!' I said.

'Nonsense!' he exclaimed, rushing forward through the cloud of smoke. And, to my surprise, he held aloft the limp and lifeless form of the rabbit he had shot. The rabbit that caught my eye was not the rabbit at which he fired! He had not noticed mine! I have often thought of it since. For, clearly,

1. I have no right to assume that the things that *I* see are the things that *other people* see.

2. I have no right to assume that the things that *other people* see are the things that *I* see.

3. I have no right to assume, because *I* see a thing, that it is necessarily obvious to *everybody else*.

4. I have no right to assume, because *I* do not see a thing, that, therefore, *nobody else can see it*.

My memory of the Three Half-Moons reminds me that, at the best, one man's vision is a very fragmentary affair. I see a part, but only a part. John sees a part, but only a part. I miss the rabbit that he sees, and he overlooks the rabbit that catches my eye. It is at least possible that, had somebody else come with us, *he* might have noticed a rabbit that neither of us saw.

I hear people complain of having 'a blind spot.' With all my heart I envy them. For I take it that they mean that they see the landscape as a whole but miss a detail here and there. My trouble is much more serious. I fasten my attention on a detail here and there and miss the landscape as a whole. This form of myopia, distressing as it is, is practically universal. Mr. Arnold Bennett has a capital essay on *Seeing Life*. In the development of his argument Mr. Bennett tells of a London man who visited Paris, and of a Paris lady who visited London. The Londoner who visited Paris for the first time observed immediately that the carriages of suburban trains had seats on the roof like tram-cars. He was so thrilled by this remarkable discovery that he observed almost nothing else. This enormous fact occupied the whole foreground of his perspective. The French woman who went to London for the first time became the victim of a similar obsession; and, as Mr. Bennett says, no English person would ever guess the phenomenon which vanquished all others in her mind on that opening day. She saw a cat walking across a street! The vision excited her. For, in Paris, cats do not roam at large in public thoroughfares. And so, for the rest of his days, the Londoner spoke of Paris as a place where people ride on the tops of trains; and the French girl spoke of London as a place where cats roam at will about the public streets!

Now this is no freak of Mr. Bennett's fancy. It

appears fantastic and grotesque; but it is no more fantastic and grotesque than life itself. Mr. Bennett speaks of Paris. Many of the most illustrious visitors who ever went to Paris made the same mistake as the man whom Mr. Bennett so tellingly depicts. We are all familiar with the descriptions of Paris which adorn our books of travel. The vision of its boulevards and its buildings, its social gaiety and its historic grandeur flashes before our minds like a noble picture projected upon a screen. But who, on visiting Paris, sees all that? Who, on visiting any city, sees the city as the guide books portray it? Every man who goes to Paris sees a Paris of his own; every man who goes to London sees a London of his own. His imagination is captivated by some little thing that responds to some little taste within him. Here, for example, are a couple of naturalists in Paris! The one is John James Audubon, the American; the other is Frank Buckland, the Inspector of British Fisheries. Ask Audubon what he saw in Paris, and he says not a word about its historic architecture, its noble statuary, or its graceful boulevards. 'The stock-pigeon,' he says, 'roosts in the trees of the garden of the Tuileries in great numbers; blackbirds also do the same and are extremely noisy before dark; some few rooks and magpies are seen there also. In the Jardins or walks of the Palais Royal, common sparrows are prodigiously plentiful. The mountain finch passes in scattered numbers over Paris at this season, go-

ing northerly.' And so on. 'Frank Buckland visited Paris,' his biographer, Mr. G. C. Bompas, tells us, 'in May, 1858; and his notes differ widely from those of the ordinary tourist. They are all about rats and fish and lizards and frogs.' This was Paris—to him!

And the pity of it is that our view of people is as fragmentary as our view of places. We look at a man; see something about him, assume that there is nothing more to be seen and construct a conclusion instantaneously. In one of his clever books, George William Curtis tells the tale of Tibottom's spectacles. Tibottom had but to put on his spectacles and he saw men as nobody else saw them. He saw them summarized, epitomized, summed up and classified. Thus, donning his magic spectacles, he looked straight at a bustling man of affairs—a man who cared more for a dollar than for anything else on earth—and straightway, seen through Tibottom's spectacles, the man became transformed into a crumpled, battered bill, of larger or smaller denomination. Now I do not know how Tibottom came by his magic glasses. And I do not care. They may have been picked out of the worthless assortment that, according to Oliver Goldsmith, Moses Primrose brought home from the fair—the gross of green spectacles for which he had exchanged the Vicar of Wakefield's horse. I do not know. I only know that, wherever they came from, they will not help us. For, obviously, the view that

they give is a wantonly distorted one. No man can, with justice, be summarized and classified as sharply as these spectacles do it. Man is essentially a mixture. 'Our padre,' Mr. G. A. Studdert Kennedy, makes one of his soldier-heroes say:

Our padre 'e says I'm a sinner,
 And John Bull says I'm a saint,
 And they're both of 'em bound to be liars,
 For I'm neither of them, I ain't.
 I'm a man, and a man's a mixture,
 Right down from 'is very birth,
 For part ov 'im comes from 'eaven,
 And part ov 'im comes from earth.
 There's nothing in man that's perfect,
 And nothing that's all complete;
 'E's nubbat a big beginning,
 From 'is 'ead to the soles of his feet!

That's the worst of wearing Tibottom's spectacles. The padre sees something unlovely in the man, and, putting on the spectacles, he recognizes in him a sinner—only that and nothing more. John Bull sees something heroic in the man, and, donning the spectacles, he recognizes in him a saint. But the man himself knows that they are both wrong. Each is the victim of the fragmentary view.

The trouble would not be quite so distressing if I could exercise some discrimination as to the fragment that greets my vision. Down at the Three Half-Moons the malady did not betray itself in its most acute form. John saw a rabbit; I saw a rabbit; I did not see the rabbit that he saw; he failed to notice the rabbit that caught my eye. What did

it matter? The rabbit that John shot amply compensated for the rabbit that eluded his observation. But it does not always work out quite so happily. I have an ugly habit, for example, of seeing the worst and missing the best. I would give all that I possess to be able to reverse the process. 'And it came to pass,' so says an ancient legend, 'that Jesus arrived one evening at the gates of a certain city. And he sent his disciples forward to prepare supper, whilst he himself, intent on doing good, walked through the streets into the market place. And he saw at the corner of the market many people gathered together looking at some object on the ground. And he drew near to see what it might be. It was a dead dog with a halter round its neck, by which he appeared to have been dragged through the mire. A viler, a more abject, a more unclean thing never met the eyes of man; and those who stood by looked on with abhorrence. "Faugh," said one, "it pollutes the air." "How long," asked another, "shall this foul beast offend our sight?" "Look at his torn hide," cried a third, "one could not even cut a shoe out of it." "No doubt," broke in a fourth, "he has been hanged for stealing." And Jesus heard them, and, looking down compassionately on the dead creature, said, *"Pearls cannot compare with the whiteness of his teeth!"* And the people were filled with amazement; and they said, "This must be Jesus of Nazareth!"; and they were ashamed, and bowed their heads and turned away.' Perhaps—who shall

say?—perhaps if I cultivated the more intimate acquaintance of that divine Observer, I should soon find my present defect completely reversed. I should be blind to the faults of my friends and wonderfully quick to see their virtues.

Perhaps! But why should I leave the matter in the misty realm of mere conjecture? Why should I make it depend upon a *perhaps*? Let us turn from imagination to mathematics! Let us suppose that I have a hundred friends. And let us suppose—to state the case as moderately as it can possibly be stated—that each of my hundred friends has ninety-nine bad points and one good one. If I could learn to focus my attention on the solitary virtue of each of my friends, and if I were to set myself, with diligent care, to emulate those lonely excellencies, I should soon possess the entire hundred, and should attain to perfection in no time.

If only I had the eyes to see that galaxy of graces, and if only I had the heart earnestly to covet them! If I could learn to see the pearl-like teeth of the dead dog, and to miss everything beside. I should shed no more tears over my fragmentary vision. And a very skillful observer assures me that such a transformation is not impossible. John Burroughs, one of our most delightful naturalists, says that I may drill myself to see exactly what I wish to see; and *that*, after all, is the secret of all clear seeing. In his *Locusts and Wild Honey*, Mr. Burroughs says that the secret of observation lies in

the habit of decisive gazing. 'Not by a first casual glance, but by a steady, deliberate aim of the eye, are the rarest things discovered. You must look intently, and hold your eye firmly to the spot, if you are to see more than do the rank and file of mankind.' It is worth trying.

It was very humiliating for John Broadbanks and me to feel that, while we had each of us seen a rabbit, we had each of us missed one. Many a time, in the years that followed, we sat together on the rocks to which we moored our boat at Tomahawk Cove, and, glancing across the river at the massive form of Maori Leap, laughed long and loudly over our experience at the Three Half-Moons. The same defective and fragmentary vision may, however, betray me into blunders at which I shall never feel like laughing. Paul said so. '*We look,*' he says, '*not at the things that are seen but at the things that are not seen, for the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal.*' To look at the things that are *seen* is a very paltry achievement. To see the things that are *unseen* is a triumph of the observer's skill. Since, therefore, my vision must needs be fragmentary, I can very well afford to miss the sordid as long as I gaze with open face on the sublime. But if I miss the things that are subtle and eternal, and only notice the things that are showy and temporal, there will be no laughter on my lips as I recite the story of my unpardonable stupidity.

II

THE REAR-GUARD

I

THE great timber mills of Wharetangi are away at the Other End of Nowhere. In the old days, John Broadbanks and I visited them occasionally, partly for the sake of a few days outback, and partly in order to conduct a service or two for the workers, their wives and families. It was a sensational experience to see the giant trees felled, dragged by bullock teams down to the stream, borne by the stream to the mills, and there handled as deftly as a Chinaman handles chopsticks. And, when the hour for service came, it was a sight for sore eyes to mark the avidity with which the families gathered in the great timber-shed, and, sitting on logs, benches, machines, boxes, or anything that offered, listened as though their lives depended on it.

On the day of which I am now thinking, the rain was falling in torrents. John and I—the guests of the manager—were ensconced in armchairs beside the fire, reading. John was immersed in Stewart White's *Blazed Trail*.

'I knew it was a tale of the lumber camps,' he explained, 'so I thought it would be just the thing to read up here. What have you got hold of?'

As a matter of fact, I had brought no book with me. But I had picked up a magazine from the side-board, and had been engrossed in an article by Colonel L. A. Mainwaring, on *The Duties of the Rear-Guard*. The Colonel shows the numerous ways in which an effective rear-guard serves a retreating army. It hampers and hinders the advance of the pursuers; it gathers up and brings in the wounded, the stragglers, and those who have fallen out of the forces in retreat; it enables the army that it guards to retire in good order and to prepare for a resumption of hostilities and, very often, its good offices turn a temporary defeat into an ultimate and complete victory. Colonel Mainwaring quotes Mr. Bennett Burleigh's description of the retreat of the Turkish forces after the disastrous battle of Lulea-Burgas. The Turks had no rear-guard. 'After the battle,' Mr. Burleigh says, 'the strongest of the retreating Turks speedily got to the front; and the weak, the sick, the wounded struggled painfully behind. Thousands of the wounded made pathetic efforts to keep up with their comrades, but many fell by the roadside, crawled off the track, and died. For three days all were without food; and every stream was turned into a mud-puddle in the fearful struggle of the sufferers to quench their thirst.' Colonel Mainwaring adorns his article with some thrilling recitals of rear-guard actions. 'There is a glory about the rear-guard,' he says, 'that cannot be eclipsed by any other form of military exploit.'

The idea had captivated my mind, and I read the passage to John.

'Well,' replied my companion, 'that's odd! I was reading, not ten minutes ago, Stewart White's eulogy on the value and importance of the Rear-Crew. I'll mark the passage, and, when you've had enough of Colonel Mainwaring, you can refresh your memory.'

II

Those who have read Mr. White's stirring story will probably recall the page that John had reached. In the later chapters of this book, Mr. White describes the great drive on the river. For months the vast solitudes have resounded with the ringing of axes, the tearing of saws, and the thunder of the falling trees. The huge logs are stacked up in enormous heaps all along the banks of the river, waiting for the spring-time and the thaw. At last the winter comes to an end. The ice breaks up; the waters are open; and the accumulated hoard is committed to the tide. From bank to bank the river is one vast carpet of timber. The agile and sinewy workers, trained to the hazardous task, leap from log to log, giving a push here and a pull there, directing the course of the drive and guarding the whole immense mass from becoming jammed. But Mr. Stewart White says that, if you would see the best work of the drive, you must go, not to the *front*, but to the *rear*. He explains that, along either

bank of the river—among the bushes, on sandbars and in the roots of trees—hundreds and hundreds of logs became stranded when the main drive passed. These logs—and they include some of the best—are restored to the current by the labors of the Rear-Crew. And, since their task is the most difficult and most dangerous of all, every man in the camps aspires to a place in the Rear-Crew. 'It was considered the height of a log-man's glory to belong to the Rear-Crew,' Mr. White tells us. 'A member of the Rear-Crew had to be able to ride any kind of log in any water; he had to be able to propel that log by jumping on it, by rolling it squirrel-fashion with his feet, by punting it as one would punt a canoe; he had to be skillful in pushing, prying, and poling other logs from the quarter-deck of the same cranky craft; he had to be prepared at any and all times to jump waist-deep into the river, to work in ice-water for hours at a stretch; and, just because all this and much more was expected of him, it was considered the height of a logman's glory to belong to the Rear-Crew. Here were the pick of the Fighting Forty—men renowned among men—men who were afraid of nothing!'

Now, this struck me as wonderfully suggestive. It put an idea into my head, and I followed it with the avidity with which a detective follows a clue.

The Rear-Guard! The Rear-Guard! 'There is no glory like the glory of the Rear-Guard!' says Colonel Mainwaring.

The Rear-Crew! The Rear-Crew! 'There is no glory like the glory of the Rear-Crew!' says Mr. Stewart White.

I seemed to hear, as I sat back in my chair, a thousand sinister voices muttering contemptuously: '*The hindmost! The hindmost! The devil take the hindmost!*' But, helped by Colonel Mainwaring and Mr. White, I saw that there is a glory about the hindmost that such mutterers are too blind to see. I saw, as I had never seen before, that the struggle of the ages is the struggle for the straggler. The battle that the very stars in their courses are fighting is, not the battle of the *foremost*, but the battle of the *hindmost*. The man who forges his way to the front determines his own destiny. But millions of covetous eyes are turned upon the man who lags behind.

The hindmost!

The hindmost!

What is to become of *the hindmost*? *The hindmost* is the prize for which all earth's forces are contending.

III

If, from some dizzy, aerial eminence, one could listen to the confused and jangling discords of earth, they would fall upon the ear in a dull wave of meaningless sound. It would be a deep, monotonous roar, like the sad and voiceless murmur of the ocean as it beats itself to spray upon the crags. Into that

melancholy monotone all the screams of the world's pain, and all the songs of the world's joy, would be merged. It is like a witch's cauldron: every laugh and every sob have been tossed into it. The voices of good men and the voices of bad men are indistinguishable. The oath of the scoundrel and the silvery laughter of the little child are as one.

But if one could analyze that confused roar, what a revelation would stand forth! Like mingled fluids that, beneath the witchery of the alchemist, separate from one another, the babel beneath would fall into two distinct parts. The one half utters itself in a cry that is as terrifying as an Indian warwhoop. The other half becomes vocal in a chant that is as sweet as a vesper chime.

'The devil take the hindmost!' cries the one.

'The best for the hindmost!' cries the other.

And, as I listen to those first voices—the sinister voices—I fear that among them, I can clearly distinguish the voice of Nature. Nature has no pity for the hindmost. Her watchword is efficiency. Here, for example, is a great beech forest! Nature wishes these woods to be the home of some lovely feathered songster. She therefore takes the trouble to produce a hundred times as many birds as she really needs. And then she turns into the forest a few hawks and owls, cats and weasels. And, when you see these swooping, prowling, preying things tearing some poor bird to pieces, you may be sure that it was the hindmost that fell into the cruel

creature's clutches. And it will be the hindmost again to-morrow that will be caught; and so on day by day. Each day the hindmost will fall a victim, and only the foremost will survive. And then the hawks and the owls, the cats and the weasels will be threatened with starvation. Only the foremost among them will be cunning enough to capture the surviving birds; and the hindmost among them, catching no birds, must perish. It is Nature's way. Nature is as fond as I am of gentle and shapely and lovable things. See, for example, how she covers this broad African plain with elands, gazelles, springboks, and other beautiful antelopes. But Nature insists that her graceful things must be of the finest texture. They must be lissome and agile and swift as well as delicate and dainty. So she turns a few hyenas in among them. And, whenever you see a striped hyena greedily crunching the bones of a limp and lifeless gazelle, you may be sure that it is with the blood of the hindmost that its hideous fangs are imbrued. The markings of the pretty but unfortunate victim were slightly defective, and therefore treacherously conspicuous or perhaps its ears were a trifle heavy, or its gait a shade too clumsy, or its pace a little too slow. The hyenas weed out the hindmost; the foremost survive to produce a new generation. And so the antelopes become fewer and the hyenas multiply. And, in the process, the rivalry among the hyenas themselves becomes more intense. Only the foremost antelopes

are left: they are difficult to catch; there are not enough of them to satisfy the ravenous hunger of all these ugly brutes. Moreover, since only the foremost antelopes survive, it follows that the hindmost hyenas cannot catch them; one by one, therefore, the hindmost hyenas must starve. And so, among things beautiful and among things terrible, Nature is always at work weeding out the hindmost. Darwin called it the *Law of Natural Selection*; Herbert Spencer called it the *Law of the Survival of the Fittest*; but, by whatever name you call it, there it is!

But, although, amidst the babel of voices that mutter *The devil take the hindmost!* I happen to have distinguished the familiar voice of Nature, I do not mean to imply that hers is the most clamant and insistent of those voices. By no means! From the bustling halls of commerce and the busy looms of industry the same shout rises. '*The devil take the hindmost!*' The weak must go to the wall: the strong alone survive. The race is to the swift and the battle to the strong. A thousand voices blend in the glorification of the foremost and a thousand forces conspire to relegate the hindmost to obscurity and perdition.

IV

Then, all at once, as I reflected on Colonel Mainwaring's tribute to the Rear-Guard, and on Mr. Stewart White's enthusiasm about the Rear-Crew,

it flashed upon me that I had met some such sentiment before. Where was it? Ah, to be sure! It was in the great triumphant proclamation of the deliverance of Israel from Babylonian captivity. *Awake, awake! put on thy strength. O Zion! put on thy beautiful garments, O captive daughter of Jerusalem! for ye shall not go out with haste nor go by flight; for the Lord will go before you and the God of Israel will be your rear-guard!* The captives were to issue from Babylon, that is to say, not as a mob, but as an army. They were not to rush out pell-mell, helter-skelter, exposed to the assaults of any marauding bedouins who cared to prey upon them; but they were to cross the desert in orderly rank and in battle formation. *The Lord will be your vanguard—guarding the foremost. And the God of Israel will be your rear-guard—shielding the hindmost. The Lord will be your vanguard—*He is as jealous as is Nature for the preservation of the foremost. *And the God of Israel will be your rear-guard—*He feels a solicitude such as Nature never knows for the weakling, the straggler, the hindmost.

V

Now, within the entire compass of Christian revelation, there is nothing more striking or more beautiful than that. It is the very essence of the gospel. In the history of the pilgrimage of the Children of Israel, there is nothing more dramatic

than the way in which, when the Egyptians pursued them, the Pillar of Cloud, which, until then, had always gone ahead of them, moved to the rear and stood in gloomy splendor between the pursued and the pursuers. In that critical hour Jehovah placed himself between Egypt's foremost chariots and Israel's hindmost stragglers. Which reminds me.

I remember, as a boy, going to hear Mr. Spurgeon preach. It was a hot summer's morning. The cavernous immensity of the huge tabernacle took my breath away. To my childish fancy the preacher seemed miles and miles from me, and I imagined that his superiority over other preachers must consist in his ability to throw his voice such enormous distances. He preached that morning on this very episode—the pillar of cloud moving in solemn grandeur to the rear of the pursued people. His point, as far as I can recall it, was that our worst enemies always pounce upon us from behind—the ghosts that rise out of the vanished years, the sins that we have left in the days gone by. He pictured the Saviour intervening between ourselves and these sinister assailants, and described, as he so well could, the Christian triumph over such menacing pursuers. 'The Lord stands between his people and their sins!' he cried. 'Jesus, who veiled the glory of his divinity in the cloud of our humanity, interposes between us and our transgressions! The Egyptians shall not come near us; and, when morning breaks, we shall see them dead upon the shore! Then shall we

sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; our sins and iniquities hath he cast into the sea!' The passage made a deep impression upon me when I first heard it, and it rushes vividly back upon my mind to-day.

VI

No wise general regards with equanimity the loss of his hindmost straggler. The weakest, the weariest, the most terribly wounded cannot safely be left upon the road. Let me enforce this contention by telling a couple of stories.

The *first* is from the Old Testament. It concerns a young slave whom the Amalekites allowed to fall away from their forces. David captured the lad, treated him kindly, and obtained from him the information that enabled him to locate and destroy the Amalekites.

The *second* is from *Rab and His Friends*. Old Dr. John Brown, of Haddington, was visiting an aged parishioner on her deathbed. She seemed wonderfully serene and confident. Wishing to test her faith, he said to her, 'But, Janet, what would you say if, after all he has done for you, God should let you drop into hell?' 'If he does,' replied Janet, '*He'll lose mair than I'll do!*' As Doctor Brown so justly observes, there is, in that rejoinder, a spiritual insight that is almost sublime. What is the loss of a human soul compared with the forfeiture of the divine honor?

'The Lord will be your vanguard!' the prophet cries, as the emancipated people set out on their pilgrimage. *'The Lord will be your vanguard'*—protecting the foremost! *'And the Lord will be your rear-guard'*—shielding the hindmost! And so, with a place in his great heart for the weak as well as for the strong, for the hindmost as well as for the foremost, the Most High gathers up all his stragglers and brings them safely to Jerusalem.

III

PINK CARNATIONS

I

A MOSGIEL wedding was a very amateurish affair; but we always took our funerals seriously. The sturdy old Scotsmen who, in my time, formed the backbone of the community, would have been scandalized at the idea of a motor funeral. In those days the vehicles were drawn by horses that could be trusted to observe an unhurried decorum, and, at the rear, most of the mourners walked. A funeral was the event of the day: nobody dreamed of dashing away from business in order to put in a decent appearance and then dashing back again. All right-minded residents divided the day, as the minister divided his sermons, into three parts. They spent the *first* part of the day getting ready for the funeral; they spent the *second* part of the day at the funeral; and they spent the *third* part in returning from the funeral and getting back into ordinary ways again.

At the cemetery itself, nobody thought of moving from the grave until the sexton had filled in the earth, patted into form the shapely mound, and arranged the floral tributes tastefully upon it. And, even then, only the more casual members of the

company departed. Others lingered, chatting in an undertone concerning the virtues of their old friend or paying respectful visits to other graves near by.

It was on the occasion of my third funeral at Mosgiel that I noticed the pink carnations on the lonely grave. It was away in a quiet corner, under the gloomy shade of a tall fir tree, and I should never have noticed it but for the lure of the lovely flowers. I stepped across and read the plain little headstone—

JESSIE GLENCAIRN

Born March 31, 1824

Died October 3, 1862

So she had been dead for more than thirty years; yet somebody still brought flowers to her grave! As far as I could discover, she had no relatives in Mosgiel: there were no people of her name on the Plain in my time: and the old residents could remember none. There is something extremely pathetic about the way in which solitary women drift into young colonial settlements, nobody knowing whence and nobody asking why. Jessie Glencairn is to be the heroine of this little screed of mine: yet I can offer no description of her. Pretty or plain; tall or short; slim or buxom; flaxen, raven or auburn; I do not know. All that I know is what the pink carnations told me.

And even the pink carnations would long ago have faded from my memory but for their quiet

insistence. I saw them again, several times. It was generally early in April or early in October—the dates on the headstone furnishing the solution of this part of the mystery. My curiosity thoroughly aroused, I mentioned the matter to the gravedigger. He had not even noticed the attention that somebody was paying to Jessie Glencairn's grave! Yet, in all probability, the thing had been going on for years!

II

We were sitting beside the dining-room fire, Ronald Shand and I, discussing the arrangements for the Saddle Hill soirée: anniversary celebrations were invariably called soirées in those days. Saddle Hill was a branch or offshoot of the Mosgiel Church; and Ronald, a young fellow of boundless energy and devotion, acted as its secretary, treasurer, and general factotum.

'There isn't much left to fix up,' Ronald remarked. 'The date fixes itself: we must have the Wednesday when the moon is full: people won't come out in the dark: that makes it Wednesday, March 30. You've agreed to preside: Mr. Broadbanks has promised to speak: what about the music?'

We had no great difficulty about the music. The program was quickly completed. The night came: the moon played her part bravely: and, to Ronald's infinite relief, the soirée was an unqualified success. And by no means the least enjoyable part of the

evening was the walk home in the sparkling moonlight. It was in the course of that walk that a strange thing happened.

The Riccarton Hall, in which the soirée was held, is on the main south road. Not far from the hall, a lane breaks away from the road, winds down past the cemetery, past the East Taieri school, past the railway station, into Mosgiel. We were a large and happy party, and, at that time of night, we scarcely expected to meet anybody on the road. Just as we turned into the lane, however, we met Groggy Douglas. I fancied that the old man shambled by in an awkward, shame-faced sort of way; but I attributed it to nervousness in finding himself the cynosure of so many pairs of eyes.

‘He looked as if he’d been drinking,’ Ronald remarked, as soon as Groggy was out of earshot.

‘That’s not likely,’ replied his father, who knew the history of most of the people on the Plain; ‘he was a hard drinker at one time; that’s how he got his nickname; but it’s many a long year now since he meddled with anything of the kind.’

My concern was now awakened as well as my curiosity. Groggy certainly behaved strangely as he passed us: the time of night coincided with the closing of the hotel: it seemed to me that somebody ought to look into the matter with a view to saving Groggy from relapse; and, if somebody, why not I? It chanced that, as we passed the school-house, I caught sight of Hughie Rowan, the butch-

er's son, saying a protracted good-night to Aggie Turnbull, the schoolmaster's niece, at the gate. I did not disturb the sweet sadness of their leave-taking; but I noted the fact; and, next day, I sought out Hughie in the township. I asked him whether, while standing at the gate with Aggie, he had seen anything of Groggy Douglas. He had seen nothing. Moreover, he volunteered the statement that, if Groggy had passed the gate within the twenty minutes that preceded our appearance, he must have seen him. Hughie's positive testimony set my mind at rest concerning Groggy's sobriety, but it awoke a fresh suspicion. The only place between the spot at which we met Groggy and the spot at which we disturbed the felicity of the sweethearts was—the cemetery! To the cemetery I hastened, and found, as I half expected to find, that the grave in the corner was again adorned with pink carnations. I glanced at the headstone: it was Jessie Glencairn's birthday!

Before returning to the township I looked in on Groggy Douglas. He was out in the garden at the back, and I went round to him. I said nothing about our meeting of the previous night: I said nothing about the flowers on the lonely grave: but I noticed clumps of carnations all round the garden—clumps from which the full-blown blossoms had been recently picked. I let it go at that: I felt that I had no right to probe his secrets: I merely resolved to cultivate Groggy's closer acquaintance.

It must have been a couple of years before Groggy opened his heart to me. I was careful to call on the third of October—the other date on the headstone—and I mentioned that, in passing, I had looked into the cemetery and admired the pink carnations on Jessie Glencairn's grave. The old man started as though I had charged him with a crime, rose awkwardly, excused himself, and left the room. He returned a moment later and resumed his seat near the window. I had resolved to say no more about the carnations unless he did.

'Aye,' he exclaimed, meditatively, 'aye, she was the only woman I ever loved; and it's a kind of a blasphemy to say that I loved her. For she was as far above me as the heaven's above the earth. I was a terrible drunkard until I met her; but, explain it as ye may, from the day I looked straight into Jessie's eyes, I never troubled the drink any more. I knew from the first that I had no hope of winning her: it wasn't for the likes o' me to make love to the likes o' her. Everybody called me Groggy; and, even when I gave up drinking, they all said that I should soon break out again worse than ever. And so I worshiped her quiet-like. Sometimes I fancied that her heart was bespoke; and, although I'd have bitten my tongue through with envy, I'd have liked to see her married to a real guid man. I don't suppose she ever guessed how I felt. I gave her flowers sometimes—she was very fond of pink carnations—and she gave me a book or two. I

remember once meeting her on a train and walking home with her. I told her that everybody was saying that I might have one of my drinking bouts any time. She gave me a look that I'll never forget to my dying day, and said she was certain that I never would. And whenever, all these years, the thirst has come back on me like a burning, raging fever, I've seemed to see her with that look on her face and those words on her lips, and I've felt that I fair hated the stuff. It's been a fierce fight at times, but I knew I'd be safe as long as I felt the same toward *her*. That's one reason why I never forgot the pink carnations!' He passed his sleeve across his face, and, a few moments later, I pressed his hand and took my leave. But as, in repassing the cemetery, I caught another glimpse of the pink carnations, I involuntarily raised my hat to them.

III

That, I fancied, was the end of it. I forgot that a lovely life never ends. My oversight in this respect was rebuked six years afterward. It was a Monday, and I was spending the day with John Broadbanks at Silverstream. I had reached the Manse in time for lunch: we had enjoyed a good chat and a hearty laugh or two at the table; and then, the meal finished, he drew a paper from his pocket.

'I have here,' he exclaimed, 'a thing, and a very pretty thing, and what will you give me for this very pretty thing?'

I put out my hand. 'Oh, no, you don't!' he cried, laughingly, 'we'll take these deck-chairs on to the lawn and I'll tell you all about it!' We were soon lounging in our favorite retreat near the cypress.

'Tell me,' he said, becoming suddenly grave, 'what was the name of the lady of whom you told me—the lady of the pink carnations?' I told him.

'Ah, I thought so!' he continued. 'Well, quite by accident I've hit upon a new twist in the story. You know old Jamie McBride of Whare-Flat?'

'I've driven over there once or twice with you on Monday afternoons,' I reminded him, 'and have waited outside with Brownie whilst you went in. Once, I think, the old man hobbled out to the gate with you as you left.'

'Ah, well,' John resumed, 'he died a fortnight ago. He was one of the best. He was of the old school, good as gold and true as steel. He was an elder of the kirk for over thirty years. The farmers swore by him. Whenever a proposal was introduced into the session, all eyes turned to Jamie. If he approved, they carried it; if he shook his head, the thing was doomed. He was a great man with the bairns, was Jamie. You remember we always had the Sunday-school picnic in his paddock; he insisted upon it: and he spent days and days devising some fresh surprise for the children every year. There were a good many tears when Jamie dropped off, I can tell you!'

I expressed my sorrow—and perplexity. 'He

must have been a great soul,' I observed, 'but I don't quite see where the pink carnations come in!'

'Bless my soul,' John laughed, 'it would never do for me to start writing stories: I should leave out the purple patches! Well, I've been going through Jamie's papers.'

In the days of which I write it was a tradition—as rigidly observed as the Sabbath itself—that, if a man died leaving no immediate relatives and no specific instructions, his papers were not to be touched until the minister had been through them.

'And among the papers,' John went on, 'I found this,' fingering the faded document that he had produced at table. 'And the funny thing is that it's a love letter. We always treated Jamie as an incorrigible bachelor who had never stroked a woman's hair in his life. We used to twit him about it: perhaps the silly jests hurt. At any rate, among his papers, I found this letter: he had kept it for nearly forty years; and, oddly enough, it's from your lady of the pink carnations—Jessie Glencairn!'

He handed it to me and lapsed into silence as I reverently opened it and proceeded to read. It was written in a clear, sensible girlish hand:

'My dearest Jamie,' it read, 'it breaks my heart to tell you that we must cherish our sweet dreams no longer. The doctor examined me this morning and says that my case is quite hopeless. One lung is gone and the other is seriously affected. Con-

sumption, as you know, is a terrible scourge on the Plain, and it has marked me for one of its early victims. It would be wicked for us to marry; so it will be best for us to see each other as little as possible. You are a good man, Jamie; they will make you an elder of the Kirk and all the people of the Plain will look up to you. I shall be proud, even on my death-bed, to think that you loved me and would have made me your wife. How I should have lived for you and clung to you! It is hard to think that you will some day love another woman, and marry her, and be the father of her children. Yet you deserve to be happy, Jamie, and I would not have it otherwise. I shall go down to my grave praying that the best things in life may be always yours; and, if the dead can bless the living, I shall breathe constant benedictions on you and those who are dear to you. God bless and comfort us both, my own brave laddie: He will make it all clear some day.'

I asked John if, among Jamie's papers, there was anything else relating to Jessie Glencairn.

'No,' he replied, 'unless a receipted account from a stonemason for a headstone, dated February 12, 1863, has anything to do with it.'

IV

I waited my opportunity before telling Groggy Douglas of this new development. Indeed, I re-

solved not to tell him at all. But he somehow sensed the fact that I knew more than he did, and pressed me for my secret. He was a very old man by this time—nearly eighty—and was subject to acute attacks of bronchitis.

One beautiful autumn afternoon, however, he looked round his garden and inspected the forest of carnations. It seemed to suggest an idea. Mustering all his strength he gathered an armful and set out down the lane toward the cemetery. There he divided them into two great bunches, laying one on the lonely grave in the corner and the other on the newly made mound of Jamie McBride. Six months later he himself lay there.

I have often thought of it since. It is a luxury to be living in a world in which it is possible for a girl to die of consumption in the thirties and yet to go on sweetening and brightening the lives of two lonely men until, still blessing her memory, each of them, full of years and honor, goes down to his quiet grave like a shock of corn full ripe.

IV

THE HALL OF MIRRORS

THERE was quite a commotion among the water-fowl down on the lake; but I had no inclination to investigate the cause of the disturbance. I was resting under the shadow of a noble old cypress on a seat to which I make it a practice to repair once a week or so. The cypress stands high up on a grassy slope, overlooking not only the lake, with its water-lilies and its wild fowl, but a vast panorama of graceful lawns and glorious forestry. To this charming retreat I steal away from time to time to read, carefully and at leisure, the letters of a certain kind, which, in the course of the week, the postman brings me. As soon as I open my morning batch of correspondence, the missives divide themselves into two separate classes. There are letters of a business kind—letters affecting one's ordinary duties and engagements, the letters that need immediate response or attention. And then there are long familiar letters—letters from the dear old home overseas, letters from Mosgiel or Hobart, letters from old comrades and from the friends of long ago. I feel, as I open these and hurriedly peruse them, that they deserve a more quiet and restful reading than it is possible to give them at the time.

The imperative demands and urgent claims of those other letters create a rush and hurry in which I cannot enjoy these as I should. I look them through, therefore, and then lay them reverently aside. And, once a week, I say good-by to the business letters and to all the matters with which they deal; and, with quiet mind and eager feet, I seek the friendly seclusion of the cypress on the hill. There, at leisure and at ease, I read the letters that form part of life's loveliest luxury.

Yesterday afternoon, while the ducks and the moorhens were squabbling over some choice morsel at the waterside, I was lost to all the world in a couple of letters that, on my walk home, started a curious train of thought. They lie before me as I write. Both are from Mosgiel, or, at least, from those endeared to me by the associations and traditions of Mosgiel. The one is from Pearl Redman, the other is from Algie Laird. Pearl was born during my first years at Mosgiel; she was only nine when I left. Algie was already at school when I settled; he was a leader among the young men of the congregation when I left. Pearl writes from Auckland. She holds an important position in a large drapery emporium there. She tells me, in the course of her long letter, of her last day at Mosgiel, of her appointment to the establishment at Auckland, and of the years that she has spent in that city. The thing that amused and impressed me was Pearl's description of her first experiences in

her new situation. 'I shall never forget,' she says, 'the day on which I took up my duties here. As I entered, the place gave me a feeling of indescribable spaciousness. The showrooms seemed to stretch away into infinity. I quickly discovered that this pleasing illusion was effected by a skillful use of mirrors. There were mirrors everywhere; and they were arranged at such an angle to the light that you did not realize that they were mirrors until you were right upon them. The consequence was that I spent my first day in running into myself at every turn. I ascended the stairs only to see myself ascending another flight of stairs immediately opposite. I emerged from the lift just in time to see myself issuing from another lift exactly like it. If I dared to look straight before me as I walked about the shop, I was sure to catch my own eye, or gaze full into my own face, as I approached from a diametrically opposite direction. I suppose I am as fond of a mirror as most girls of my age, but I never grew so thoroughly sick of the sight of myself as I did that day.'

So much for Pearl. I read her letter under the cypress tree and then turned to Algie's.

Algie now owns a large foundry in Sydney, and the years have brought him great prosperity. He writes from London, whither he has gone on a business tour. 'It is not all business,' he says; 'I am getting a good deal of fun out of it. I spent a fortnight in Scotland, ten days in Ireland, and quite a

long while in France. And, by the way, I was taken, at Versailles, to the Hall of Mirrors in which the Great Peace was signed in 1919. I was shown where the various statesmen sat, and I could almost fancy that I saw them leaving their places one by one to sign the famous document.'

I walked home across the park thinking of the fast, fond friendships of earlier years and thinking also of the mirrors. And somehow the two subjects blended into one. As, in fancy, I reviewed the old familiar faces, I seemed to be strolling, like Pearl and Algie, among the mirrors. For, of friends and acquaintances, there are *two* kinds; there are those who lead me to a false estimate of myself, and there are those who teach me to know myself. There are those whose influence upon me makes for *affectation* and there are those whose influence upon me makes for *revelation*. There are those who make me turn my back upon myself, and there are those who compel me to look myself straight in the face and to know myself for what I am. When Smith introduces Jones to Robinson he performs one of the most sacred rites of friendship but when he introduces Jones to Jones he exercises the loftiest prerogative of all.

Not, by any means, that every man who, in honest Anglo-Saxon, tells me the plain unvarnished truth about myself is necessarily my best and dearest friend. No, no! My best and dearest friend exercises a sacred ministry of self-revelation, but he does

it as the mirrors do. And the way of the mirrors is a quiet and kindly way.

Bret Harte has told us how the proprietor of Tuttle's store spruced up the rough miners of Roaring Camp. He said not a word; but he hung mirrors all round the store! And when the men, lounging about the place, caught sight of the reflections in the glittering glasses, they silently resolved to pay some attention to their personal appearance! On the general subject of mirrors, a lady's evidence is to be implicitly trusted, and Miss Mazie V. Caruthers has chanted their praise:

Always the mirrors on a wall
My curiosity enthrall.

They see so much, but never tell,
Keeping their crystal secrets well.

Within their depths, how many a face
Has peered, to leave therein no trace!

Haggard and old; or young and fair,
Have in their time been visioned there.

Reflecting everything, and still
Revealing neither good nor ill.

Oh, mirrors! confidants like you,
Who tell no tales, are passing few!

They are, indeed; and, for that reason, they form the select circle whose letters I take with me to the seat overlooking the swans.

All this reminds me of the story of Nathan. Da-

vid in the presence of Nathan felt as Pearl Redman felt when she entered the Auckland showroom; he saw himself as he had never seen himself before. By means of his clever parable about the one little ewe lamb, and by means of the sudden personal thrust that immediately followed, Nathan introduced David to David; and David was, in consequence, a better man forever afterward.

Nathan 'is one of the pioneers of literature. Wherever statues are erected to the memory of our great novelists, a monument should be set up in a conspicuous place to his eternal honor. He was the first to realize the moral potentialities of fiction. He blazed the trail along which our most illustrious dramatists have followed. By means of his touching story of the rich man who stole and slew the pet lamb from the peasant's cottage, Nathan held a mirror up to life and brought a monarch to his knees. Shakespeare, taking the hint, produced something very like it. He has told us how Hamlet trained the strolling players to reproduce the king's crime before the royal but guilty party; and, when the monarch saw his own evil deeds enacted on the stage before him, the blood left his face, his heart stood still, the lights swam in blurred confusion before his failing sight, and, pleading sudden sickness, he staggered from the theater. What Hamlet did for Claudius, and Nathan did for David, our best novelists and dramatists have been doing for us all ever since. It is good for a man, sitting with

his novel beside a roaring fire on a winter's night, to see his own little hypocrisies reflected in the hypocrisies of Uriah Heep, to see his own petty selfishness reflected in the selfishness of Mr. Dombey, to see his own vacillations and inconstancies exaggerated yet reflected in the oddities of Mr. Micawber, and to see the possibilities of his own redemption reflected in the noble self-sacrifice of Sydney Carton. I never expect to visit the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles; but whenever I dip into *David Copperfield* or *Bleak House* or *Little Dorrit*, I enjoy a very similar experience.

This quiet study of mine is itself a Hall of Mirrors. Charles Reade had the walls of his snugery covered with mirrors so cunningly arranged that they constituted themselves a kind of *camera obscura*. Every movement outside his window was vividly reflected on the wall before him. The black-bird that flew from the plane tree to the elm, and the deer that went ambling across the park, were reproduced with cinematographic fidelity, and in Nature's own coloring, on the novelist's wall. I have no deer-park under my study window, and, even if I had, I have no wall to spare within this modest sanctum of mine; yet, as I glance upon the shelves around me, I seem to be gazing at reflections quite as vivid as those that adorned the home of Charles Reade. I catch sight of the works of Stanley and Livingstone, and at once all the pageant of Central Africa unrolls before me; my eye falls upon

Wallace's *Travels*, and I am instantly transported to the picturesque banks of the Amazon; the names of Scott and Shackleton summon to the fancy the virgin glaciers of the snowy South. And so on. I would rather have these mirrors than those that Charles Reade contrived. *They* brought a few acres of deer-park into his study, but *these* spread the veldts, the jungles, the deserts, the oceans, and the cities of the world before me.

All this, however, is *indirect* reflection. The mirror that reveals the blackbird in the plane tree, or the stag among the poplars, must be placed at an angle. The mirror that stands fairly and squarely before you reveals to you your own features. Like true friendship, it is self-revealing. Life's most fond and intimate relationships do for us what, according to Milton, the glassy pool in the garden did for Eve. She herself tells us of her experience at that lovely spot:

As I bent down to look, first opposite
A shape within the watery gleam appeared,
Bending to look on me: I started back,
It started back; but, pleased, I soon returned.
Pleased it returned as soon with answering looks
Of sympathy and love. There I had fixed
Mine eyes till now, and pined with vain desire,
Had not a voice thus warned me: "*What thou seest,
What there thou seest, fair creature, is thyself!*"

No man has a right to become morbid; no man has a right to become conceited; but every man has a right to know himself and to know himself well.

In the *Life of Schopenhauer* we are told that that eccentric philosopher wandered one day into the Royal Gardens at Berlin. The sentry challenged him.

‘Who are you, sir?’

‘I do not know,’ replied Schopenhauer. ‘I wish you could tell me!’

The sentry reported him as a lunatic; but it was not idiocy; it was philosophy. The question that the sentry asked was the very question that the thinker was trying to solve. But this sort of thing will not do. And, because it will not do, God has made his universe a Hall of Mirrors. There are looking-glasses everywhere. There were looking-glasses in the Tabernacle in the wilderness.

I have often been arrested by the striking record that Moses made the laver in the Tabernacle out of the looking-glasses of the women. I once tried hard to persuade John Broadbanks to preach to his people at Silverstream from that suggestive text. What a discourse my old friend would have delivered! I can almost hear him expatiating on the fact that the Jewesses had a part in the construction of the Tabernacle. And such a part! They brought their mirrors. As old John Trapp characteristically puts it, they freely gave the instruments whereby they beautified their bodies to make the instrument whereby they sanctified their souls. Nor is this all. Think of the way in which my Mosgiel neighbor could have enlarged on the use to which the mirrors

were put! They were worked into the laver in order—to quote from Matthew Henry—in order that the priests, when they came to wash their faces, might see the spots and make them clean. ‘In the washing of repentance,’ adds the good old Puritan, ‘there is need of the looking-glass of self-examination.’ The mirrors revealed the defilement: the laver provided the means of cleansing. The passionate and persuasive appeal with which John Broadbanks would have brought that fine evangelistic sermon to a close would have stirred the conscience and touched the heart of every hearer.

Yes, there are mirrors everywhere. A thousand forces are waiting to do for us what Mr. De Morgan’s *Alice-for-Short* does for Mrs. Verrinder. For sixty years Mrs. Verrinder has been dead to all the world. It is a case of traumatic insanity. Her husband lived close to the asylum for thirty years in order that he might be available if a lucid interval occurred. But none came, and, growing tired of waiting, he dropped into his grave. At length, with the advance of science, it is suggested that an operation might meet the case; and the work of skillful surgeons is crowned with complete success. Mrs. Verrinder recovers; but, in recovering, has lost all sense of the years that the long illness has stolen from her. She fancies that she is still girlish and pretty. *Alice-for-Short* undertakes the delicate task of introducing her to herself. She leads her gently toward a full-length mirror.

'Who is *that?*' the old lady asks.

'Who is *what?*' Alice replies.

The old lady's eyes search the room. 'It's very strange,' she says; 'I could have sworn that I saw the reflection of a new old lady, with white hair, in the glass. Where is she?' She again looks round the room.

'There is no one here but ourselves,' says Alice.

'How very odd!' Mrs. Verrinder replies. 'I could have sworn it.' And then she approaches nearer to the mirror; but, engaged in arranging the sleeve of her dress, she does not look up till she gets quite close. Then she breaks into a loud, hysterical laugh, more dreadful than any cry of pain.

'Oh, Alice,' she cries, 'it's me, it's me, *it's me!*'

She trembles like an aspen-leaf. Alice-for-Short guides her to a chair, bends over her, and kisses the wrinkled, upturned face. Mrs. Verrinder has made her great discovery. She has recognized herself!

'*It's me!*' she cries, gazing into the mirror.

'*It's me!*' exclaims Eve, peering into the tranquil waters.

'*It's me!*' mutters the king, rising with ashen face from his seat in the theater.

'*It's me!*' cries David, trembling as he grasps the interpretation of the prophet's parable.

Mr. V. A. Wilson tells us that, in her later years, Queen Elizabeth shunned any reflection of her own image. 'The elaborately framed mirrors, once such a feature of the palace, were,' he says, 'removed lest

the Queen should behold herself as she was—a lean, haggard, over-dressed old woman.’ There are a few folk in the world who proceed every day upon the same principle. It is very silly, and their best friends will try to help them out of it. And, since a minister should be among a man’s best friends, he is the happiest minister who, in the quiet and kindly way that mirrors have, maintains a gracious ministry of personal revelation. His gospel is a Hall of Mirrors. It is addressed to *Whosoever will*. But, when they hear that *Whosoever*, the people recognize themselves, and each delightedly exclaims: *‘It’s me! It’s me!’*

V

THE SECRET STORE

I

THERE is always a peculiar pleasure in visiting those places about which there hang wealthy clusters of historic associations. Who does not love to explore old battlefields, to poke about the ruins of crumbling castles and to gaze upon the landscapes that have been consecrated by the great struggles and hoary traditions of golden days gone by? And the delight of such an experience is enhanced when the scenery is as enchanting as that amidst which I passed this afternoon. I took a stroll from the gates of the Palace Beautiful down the Valley of Humiliation, as far as the monument that stands near Forgetful Green to mark the spot on which Christian vanquished Apollyon. I could find none of those marks of the conflict to which Greatheart drew Christiana's attention; but what could I expect? I am, I think, to be congratulated on having located the site of the Palace, only some scattered vestiges of which now remain, and on having been able to trace the road down to Forgetful Green. As a matter of fact, it is not now a green at all. Not a blade of grass is to be seen. It has been cut up for settlement, and is smothered with roads and

residences. The monument is still there, although the inscription has perished, and few of the people in the district seem to know its story. Some surprises were in store for me. That is the beauty of visiting such places. Your preconceived notion of the event has to be remodelled. You find that things cannot have been just as you had pictured them. You are compelled to rearrange the details in your fancy in order to make them suit the lie of the land. In this connection I may say that I had that experience this afternoon.

I had no idea, for example, until I visited the scene, that the conflict with Apollyon took place so near to the Palace Beautiful; and I had never before grasped the essential connection between the two places. To my astonishment I discovered to-day that the one spot is within sight of the other. The monument can just be seen from the Palace. From the pretty lattice window of the quiet little chamber whose name was Peace—the Chamber in which the spent pilgrim slept so soundly—a watcher could have seen the whole of that grim conflict in the valley. And, from the monument, you can distinctly make out the hill on which the Palace stood. Christian was probably too much engrossed in his terrible combat to notice it; or else he might have caught occasional glimpses, over his antagonist's shoulder, of the turrets and windows of the lovely place in which he had been so royally welcomed and so hospitably entertained.

II

I saw this afternoon, as I have never seen before, the absolutely vital part that the Sisters of the Palace—Discretion, Piety, Charity, and Prudence—took in the fearful combat. When Christian reached the Palace he was at the fag end of everything. He was weary, spent, famished, and exhausted. Supposing there had been no Palace Beautiful! Supposing there had been no gracious sisterhood to entertain him! The thought makes one shudder. He would have been compelled to struggle on along the road down which I passed this afternoon and would have fallen, unarmed and unprepared, into the hands of his frightful foe! Until you have actually visited the place, you do not realize all this. In the story, as Bunyan naïvely tells it, the peaceful scenes in the Palace do not directly relate themselves to the deadly combat later on. The Sisters did not even mention to their happy guest the awful struggle in which they knew that he would so soon be engaged. Yet, but for them, the pilgrim must have been destroyed as soon as he left the Palace grounds, and must have left his bones to bleach in the darksome vale near by. For it was by them that he had been rested, refreshed, strengthened, instructed, and equipped. The very last room into which they took him was the armory. ‘And when he came there they harnessed him from head to foot with what was of proof, lest perhaps he should meet with assaults

in the way.' And there they buckled to his belt that redoubtable sword, with its two sharp edges, with which he subsequently vanquished his foe. Even then they were loth to leave him. They accompanied him down the hill, and, when at length they turned back, they gave him a loaf of bread and a flagon of wine to carry with him on his journey. And it was well for him that they did. For, although he was victorious over his dread antagonist, he was so utterly spent that, but for that sustaining bread and stimulating flagon, he might have perished afterward from sheer exhaustion.

In his *Anselm of Canterbury*, Mr. J. M. Rigg tells a pretty story of Anselm's escape from his father's home in the valley of Aosta. On his way to the monastery of Bec under Lanfranc, which he hoped to enter, he found himself without food or water in high Alpine solitudes. He and his companion had vainly searched every corner of their baggage for a morsel of bread, and were trying to assuage their misery by filling their mouths with snow. In a frenzy of despair, Anselm opened his ransacked wallet once more—perhaps delirium was beginning to creep over him—and, to his amazement, he saw in it a white loaf made of the finest flour. It was small, but it sufficed to keep life within the travelers until the snowfields had been left behind. It was thus that the Sisters of the Palace Beautiful forefancied and forestalled the desperate necessities of the lonely pilgrim. All this occurred

to me this afternoon as I sauntered down the valley. I stood on a grassy knoll and glanced back along the road by which the pilgrims used to travel. And, standing there, I caught myself cogitating this suggestive question. If the Sisters of the Palace Beautiful had never shown Christian such charming hospitality, where else could the exhausted pilgrim have been rested and refreshed in preparation for the impending conflict? If *they* had failed to arm him with helmet and with breastplate, with sword and with shield, who else would have equipped him for that terrible encounter? If *they* had forgotten to furnish his wallet with the loaf of bread and the flagon of wine that so revived him when he lay, wounded and spent, upon the ground, who else would have moistened his lips in the hour of his extremity? To these questions there is no answer.

III

If, as all the teachers say, the Palace Beautiful is Bunyan's picture of the church, I suppose that the loaf of bread and the flagon of wine represent the church's unrecorded and unconscious ministry. The Sisters never saw how much help and comfort these gifts afforded. They knew that the armor would be essential and it was part of their business to equip the pilgrims in that way. But the loaf of bread and the flagon of wine was a kind of extra; a morsel of womanly thoughtfulness in taking farewell of their guest. It would at least have a sacra-

mental value. As he sat beside the road, eating the bread and quaffing the wine, the pilgrim would think fondly of the hospitalities and hostesses of the Palace. There is always something sacramental about the law of association. I chanced only this morning on a story of a little orphan boy who was being taken to a new and untried home among strangers. His family had been of the very poor. The father had died several years before, and the mother battled against want and failing health, striving as best she might to provide for herself and her child. Now death had taken her also; there were no relatives to care for the boy, and a place had therefore been found for him with a family in the country. It was a ride of several miles to the strange home, and the farmer who had agreed to transport him thither noticed that the little fellow sitting so shyly beside him in the great wagon often thrust his hand into his worn blouse as if to make sure of some treasure. Curiosity at last prompted the man to ask what it was. He had shown the boy frequent kindnesses during the journey, and was now repaid by the timid confidence of his young companion.

'It's just a piece of mother's dress,' he said. 'When I get kind—kind o' lonesome—I like to feel it. 'Most seems 'sif she—wasn't so far off.'

The same law meets us at every turn; and the Sisters knew that, wherever the *body* of the pilgrim might be when he ate of the bread and drank of

the wine, his *soul* would be back in the Palace Beautiful. This, I say, the Sisters, womanwise, must have anticipated. But they can never have imagined that their parting gift of the loaf and the flagon would have saved the pilgrim's life in his hour of sorest stress and direst need. I suppose that Bunyan meant that the church projects her gracious influences far beyond her own walls. In the hour of their distress, those wayfarers who have gone forth from her shelter derive succor from her earlier ministries and bless her in their pain.

IV

Only those who have watched the daughters of the Orient grinding corn into flour between their heavy stones know how sacramental a thing is that loaf of bread that the Sisters slipped into the pilgrim's wallet. The golden corn is the life and laughter of the fruitful field; it is cut down and thrashed out and crushed to powder in order that hungry men may live. Only those who have watched the sons of the east treading the crimson winepress know how sacramental a thing is that flagon of wine that the Sisters handed to their departing guest. The wealthy and luscious clusters are the exuberance of nature, the bounty of the fertile plains, the pride of earth's sunniest climes; they are torn off, and thrown into the pit, and trampled underfoot that their lifeblood may stimulate the flagging energies and exhilarate the drooping spirits

of the fainting sons of men. The corn gives its *body* and the grapes give their *blood* that men may live by their death. Among all the myriad marvels of hillside and valley there is nothing in this sacramental world quite as sacramental as that loaf of bread and that flagon of wine. Now let me think.

V

A loaf of bread and a flagon of wine! When, after his conflict, Christian lay upon the grass, sore wounded and completely spent, he ate of the bread and drank of the wine that the Sisters of the Palace Beautiful had slipped into his wallet. And, straight-away, he was refreshed and revived and went on his way. It is always by means of the bread and the wine that the healing virtues come. Under instructions from their Lord, the Sisters of the Palace Beautiful still dispense the sacred bread and the holy wine, and tell its mystic meaning. There is nothing so soothing to a suffering soul as the story of a suffering Saviour. Dereliction is strangely comforted by Gethsemane. The Son of God hung upon a tree, and the leaves of that tree are for the healing of the nations. Tell a stricken world of a stricken Redeemer—stricken, smitten of God and afflicted—and that stricken world feels instinctively that the Holiest is not remote from the lowliest.

Never a heartache, never a groan,
Never a teardrop, never a moan,
Never a danger, but there, on the Throne
Moment by moment, He feels for His own.

A loaf of bread and a flagon of wine! He took a loaf of bread and, breaking it, said: 'Take, eat, this is my body that is broken for you, broken for you!'

A loaf of bread and a flagon of wine! He took a flagon of wine and, pouring it out, said, 'Drink ye all of it; this is my blood that is shed for you, shed for you!'

A loaf of bread and a flagon of wine! There is wondrous virtue for a wounded world in *a loaf of bread and a flagon of wine*; and I was glad to have the fact brought home to me afresh as I stood beside the crumbling monument at Forgetful Green this afternoon.

VI

EMPTY HOUSES

It is not good that the man should be alone; and certainly it is not good that the woman should be. The words that were first uttered by the Voice that breathed o'er Eden have been repeated at every wedding service since, but there is neither rime nor reason in restricting their significance to that romantic setting. They are capable of and entitled to a much wider application.

'I hate entering an empty house,' a lady said to me the other evening. I had seen her to the gate, and, noticing her hesitation, had accompanied her to the door. 'It's all right as soon as you are in,' she explained. 'You can open the windows, start the clocks, and give the place a general air of occupation; but I cannot bear turning the key and crossing the threshold, knowing that it is all desolate and still.'

I could sympathize with her. I remember years ago spending a long day on an uninhabited island. A fishing smack was leaving very early in the morning, and the fishermen had invited me to accompany them. We started while it was still dark, and, running before a good wind, found ourselves, soon after sunrise, scudding past a large, rocky island, about a

The Three Half-Moons

mile and a half long. The men told me that it had not been visited for years. It occurred to me that, while I could go fishing any day, the chance of poking about a desert island comes but seldom. My companions may have read my thoughts, for, a moment later, they asked me if I would care to land. I said that I should. I took a gun, a fishing line, a box of matches and a tin of fresh water; and they promised to call for me at sunset. For an hour or two I enjoyed myself immensely. I climbed the hilltops and surveyed the island from each eminence. I poked about in the rocks and caverns along the coast. I soon discovered that there was nothing much to shoot. I came upon a sheltered inlet in which I caught a few fish. They were so plentiful that I could watch them as they thronged to my bait, and so tame that it seemed a shame to take them. Soon, however, the wind rose, the sea grew angry, the breakers came thundering in, and I had to give it up. I looked at my watch. It was only ten o'clock! And I had to wait until sunset! I have never known a longer day than that one. As afternoon wore slowly toward evening; an uncanny feeling stole over me. It was not exactly fear. I knew that there was nothing on the island that could hurt me: I knew that, even if the storm prevented the boat from returning to the reef, I could subsist very comfortably on the fish that I could catch and the birds that I could shoot. But the loneliness! I shall never forget that day as long as I live. How

men can spend years under similar conditions and retain their sanity, I cannot imagine. It may be that, under pressure of necessity, I should have grown used to it. I do not know. I only know that the sight of the fishing smack bearing down toward the island was the loveliest thing I saw that day, and the sound of human voices rang in my ears like music. It is not good that the man should be alone. He is a *social* animal just as he is a *land* animal. Being a *land* animal he cannot live in the sea, and being a *social* animal he will perish in solitude.

Now this explains much. Let me take the illustration nearest to hand. Here am I, my papers spread out on the table before me, sitting on the veranda of this Australian home of mine. I have often smiled at the curious figure that Australia cuts in the literature of the world. No country has been depicted in terms so inconsistent and contradictory. One would almost think that there are two Australias—an Australia that is enlivening, inspiriting, invigorating; and an Australia that is gloomy, depressing and sad. Some of our writers emphasize the fact that Australia is essentially a land of ample sunshine, a land whose genial climate woos people into the open air and lures them to a life that is natural, wholesome, and free. As a suitable representative of writers of this class, I may cite Mr. C. J. Dennis, who knows Australia well. To Mr. Dennis, Australia is always a land of bright days

and starlit nights, a land in which one feels that it is good to be alive. Lovers of Ginger Mick will remember, for example, the letter in which that worthy gave his friend, the Sentimental Bloke, an account of the various types of soldiers to be met with at the front:

Now the British Tommy curses an' the French does fancy
 stunts,
 An' the Turk 'e 'owls to Aller, an' the Gurkha grins an'
 grunts;
 But our boys is singin', singin', while the blinded shells is
 flingin'
 Mud and death into the trenches in them 'eavens called the
 Fronts.

The question is: why were the Australians distinguished as 'the singing soldiers'? And it is to that question that the Sentimental Bloke essays an answer.

Now this letter gits me thinkin' when I read such tales as
 these,
 An' I takes a look around me at the paddicks an' the trees;
 When I 'ears the thrushes trillin', when I 'ear the magpies
 fillin'
 All the air from earth to 'eaven wiv their careless melerdies—
 It's the sunshine uv the country, caught and turned to bonzer
 notes;
 It's the sunbeams changed to music pourin' from a thousand
 throats.

Can a soljer 'elp 'is singin' when 'e's born in such a land?
 Wiv the sunshine an' the music pourin' out on every 'and,
 Where the very air is singin', an' each breeze that blows is
 bringin'
 'Armony an' mirth an' music fit to beat the blazin' band,

On the march an' in the trenches, when a swingin' chorus
starts,
They are pourin' bottled sunshine of their 'Omeland from
their 'earts.

This is one side of the picture. It represents, and represents accurately, the more cheerful and attractive phase of Australian life. But those who have studied our Australian literature at all carefully know perfectly well that there is another and less pleasing phase.

Marcus Clarke knew Australia at least as well as Mr. Dennis knows it. But he was not impressed by that aspect of Australian life upon which Mr. Dennis has laid such stress. He saw the same things, but he saw them from another angle. 'What,' he asks, 'is the dominant note of Australian scenery? That which is the dominant note of Edgar Allan Poe's poetry—weird melancholy. The Australian mountain forests are funereal, secret, stern. Their solitude is desolation. They seem to stifle in their black gorges a story of sullen despair.' Even the fauna and flora of Australia intensify, Marcus Clarke feels, the sombre character of the general outlook. 'From the melancholy gums,' he complains, 'strips of white bark hang and rustle. The very animal life of these frowning hills is either grotesque or ghostly. Flights of white cockatoos stream out, shrieking like evil souls. The sun suddenly sinks, and the mopokes burst out into horrible peals of semi-human laughter. All is fear-inspiring

and gloomy. No bright fancies are linked with the memories of the mountains. Hopeless explorers have named them, out of their sufferings, Mount Misery, Mount Dreadful, Mount Despair. Placed before the frightful grandeur of these barren hills, the soul drinks in their sentiment of defiant ferocity and is steeped in bitterness.' If this experience were singular, and the testimony were without corroboration, one might be pardoned for suspecting that such sentiments were but the outpourings of a misanthropic spirit incapable of seeing brightness anywhere. But others have felt in the same way. Marcus Clarke penned his impressions in 1884. At just about that time, Commander Gambier was in Australia; and, in his *Links in my Life*, he tells us what he thought of it. It is, he declares, the ugliest and most uninteresting country in the world! He was nearly driven mad, he says, by a desperate sense of social loneliness.

A desperate sense of social loneliness! It is in those words that Commander Gambier unconsciously offers us a key to the solution of the problem. *It is not good that the man should be alone.* A lonely Paradise may be a maddening Perdition. Australia is a land of cities and of solitudes. It would be better for us in every way if the population were more evenly distributed; but that is neither here nor there; we are at present dealing with things as they are. The aspect of Australian life reflected in the poems of Mr. Dennis stands associated with a

certain amount of sociality and genial intercourse. The aspect of Australian life depicted by Marcus Clarke and Commander Gambier is entirely destitute of anything of the kind. As Ruskin points out in his *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, the presence of that social element makes all the difference.

Ruskin says that one of the happiest hours of his life was passed among the masses of pine forests which skirt the course of the Ain, above the village of Champagnole, in the Jura. He describes, as he is so well able to do, the magnificence of the landscape that brought to him such an extraordinary fulness of delight. The giant mountains, the tossing pines, the rushing streams and the distant fields all find a place in the enchanting picture. 'It was spring-time,' he adds, 'and such company of joyful flowers as I know not the like of among all the blessings of the earth were coming forth in crowded clusters all around me: there was room enough for all, but they crushed their leaves into all manner of strange shapes only to be nearer each other.' And then he tells of a very peculiar psychological experience through which he passed. It would be difficult, he says, to conceive a scene less dependent upon any other interest than that of its own secluded and serious beauty; yet he vividly recalls the sudden blankness and chill which were cast upon it when he endeavored, in order more strictly to arrive at the sources of its impressiveness, to imagine it, for a moment, a scene in some aboriginal forest of the

New Continent. The flowers in an instant lost their light, the river its music; the hills became oppressively desolate; a heaviness in the boughs of the darkened forest showed how much of their former power had been dependent upon a life which was not theirs. Now here is a singular thing! Place the scene in eastern France, with smiling villages and busy towns just out of sight, and it fills the beholder with 'an extraordinary fulness of joy'; place the self-same scene in some aboriginal forest of a New Continent, and he shudders as he surveys its desolate grandeur!

No one can read Robinson Crusoe without feeling that many of the landscapes on his island must have been wonderfully idyllic and enchanting; but the solitude of the castaway blinded him to their beauty; to him it was a 'horrible place.' Enoch Arden's isle was, he admits, a scene of indescribable loveliness. He saw, in some blurred way, its charms. But, oh, the torture of its solitude! The loneliness made it 'a beauteous, hateful isle' to him. To a greater extent than we sometimes suppose, man himself makes the world in which he lives. We have no conception of the degree to which the beauty of the universe and the charms of life arise from the joys of social intercourse. Therein lies the secret of the contradictory descriptions of Australian scenery. In company, the bush is beautiful; in solitude, it is terrible. 'I have known men,' says an Australian writer, in commenting upon the tragic

death of Adam Lindsay Gordon, 'I have known sleepless men, not easily moved by fear, camped out at night on the slopes of our huge unpeopled mountains, waking their slumbering companions and crying "For God's sake, speak to me!"—so awful has the indescribable silence become. The desolation and mournfulness of it seem to have become concrete and living, and as if moving to smite and fell one with a blow.' It is, on a larger scale, the horror of the empty house.

The monk thinks that, notwithstanding all this, it is good that the man should be alone, and life becomes grim and sombre in consequence. John Wesley nearly made the same mistake. His first notion of the Christian life was a stern, austere, ascetic one; and the temper grew upon him. 'Entering now upon a new life,' he writes, 'I should prefer such a retirement as would seclude me from all the world.' 'The impulse which makes the monk was stirring in Wesley's chilled blood,' says Doctor Fitchett. And the same author goes on to say that 'the strain of such a religion as that on which Wesley was now trying to live was too much for human nature. Even *his* tough body, with its nerves of wire and tissues of iron, broke down.' Happily, at this juncture, he fell under the influence of a good old man who showed him that the religious life is essentially a life of fellowship, a social life. Wesley was profoundly impressed: he gathered a group of friends about him: the famous Holy Club sprang

into being: Methodism was born: and the face of England was changed. To the very close of that long, tremendous life, Wesley was one of the most companionable of men; and the church whose history is associated with his name is noted, the wide world over, for its genial cordiality and its glow of social charm.

It may be that even the glories of the life to come will derive more than half of their attractiveness from the society in which we shall view them. Samuel Rutherford certainly thought so. In his last hours he was still thinking wistfully of the little church at Anwoth to which he had ministered for so long.

Oh! if one soul from Anwoth
Meet me at God's right hand,
My Heaven will be two Heavens,
In Immanuel's land.

Even in the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God, it is not good that the man should be alone.

VII

THE EMPEROR

I

FROM Australia to Scandinavia is a far, far cry; yet, as I sit on this Australian lawn, within sight of Captain Cook's old anchorage, I join the Norwegians in heaping their flowers on Henrik Ibsen's tomb. It is the centenary of his birth; and, in honor of that interesting circumstance, I have spent the afternoon reading once more the heart-searching romance of *Peer Gynt*. Ibsen is a somewhat terrifying figure in literature: he overawes one; it is difficult to feel at home with him. He is one of the world's outstanding originals, belonging to no recognized class and conforming to no regular type. Grim and taciturn, he stands severely alone. Even in his lifetime, he gloried in anything that would cut him off from the main current of humanity. Without indulging in any vapid affectations, he loved to sink into himself and to place an impassable barrier between himself and the great mass of his fellows.

When he was a youth in his teens, apprenticed to an apothecary at Grimstad, it was said of him that he walked about the narrow streets of that quaint little town like a mystery sealed with seven

seals. To the last day of his life he kept on his writing table a small ivory tray containing a number of grotesque figures: a wooden bear, a tiny devil, two or three cats—one of them playing a fiddle—and some rabbits. 'I never write a single line of any of my dramas,' he used to say, 'without having that tray and its occupants before me on my table. I could not write without them. But why I use them and how, this is my own secret!' I strongly suspect that the odd little figures possessed no real significance at all; they were a species of incomprehensible mumbo-jumbo; but they widened the chasm that separated their owner from the common herd; they established a no-man's-land across which other men had to gaze at him in mystification; and that was all he cared. He built a wall between himself and the rest of the world, and, hiding behind it, laughed up his sleeve at the bewildered multitude on the other side.

The explanatory secret is that he never forgave the fates for the scurvy trick they played him as a boy. He was born into a wealthy home, a home distinguished by luxury and social eminence, as well as by culture, delicacy and refinement. His father was a kind of village squire. But, when Henrik was eight years of age, his father's fortunes were whelmed in disaster, and the family was reduced at one blow from affluence to poverty. A boy of eight is at the worst possible age to face so devastating a catastrophe. He is old enough to feel the pinch

and to cherish a fierce rebellion against the humiliation in which he has become involved, without being able to understand and appreciate the justice of the forces that have compassed his wretchedness. Ibsen's proud young spirit received a wound, in that early crisis, from which it never recovered. He was soured from his youth. He bore a grudge against the social order to the end of his days. He writhed in secret as he reflected on the liberal education that he had once hoped to enjoy. During the years that he had expected to spend at the best universities in Europe, he was washing bottles in an apothecary's yard and running messages about the muddy byways of Grimstad. On one point, however, he registered a stern and immovable resolve. Before the crash came upon him, he had promised himself that he should be a poet. Why should poverty deprive him of that prospect? He set his teeth and vowed that, come what might, he would still utter the thoughts that were surging for expression within his soul. Let Fate do her worst; he would sing his songs in spite of her! He did! And thus it comes about that I have been spending this sunny autumn afternoon in the company of *Peer Gynt*.

II

'O God,' prayed Thomas Carlyle, as he took his hat from the peg, 'help me to be king over all that lies beneath this hat!' That was precisely the philosophy of Henrik Ibsen. Mr. Claude C. H. Wil-

liamson opens his essay on Ibsen by saying that 'as man and as artist, his creed was *the cultivation and realization of self*.' This one idea runs like a scarlet thread through all his work; but it never shines so clearly as in the pages of *Peer Gynt*. Over the entrance to his hut among the mountains, this extraordinary hero proclaimed to the world that it was the abode of *Peer Gynt, Emperor of Himself*. The pity of it is that it remained a nebulous ideal, a mere parrot-phrase; Peer never seriously attempted its actual realization. But we are getting ahead of ourselves. We must take things in their proper order.

III

With the early pranks, vagaries, and misadventures of *Peer Gynt* we need not trouble ourselves. For, as Mr. Bernard Shaw says in his lecture on *Ibsenism*, Peer's first boyish notion of the self-realized man is, not the saint, but the demigod whose indomitable will is stronger than destiny, the fighter, the master, the man whom no woman can resist, the mighty hunter, the knight of a thousand adventures, the model, in short, of the lover in a lady's novel or the hero in a boy's romance. In these early days, Peer knows of no *self*, no soul, no ego beyond the realm of the physical. Brute force is everything. The consequence is that he realizes and develops the limited *self* of which he has knowledge by exploits that make him the dread of the

countryside. When Ase, his mother, offends him, he lifts her bodily on to the roof of the mill-house and leaves her there, screaming in terror. In an impish dare-devil moment he seizes the bride at a wedding, tosses her across his shoulder, and bolts with her over the hills. He thinks it a capital jest to break the blacksmith's arm. 'Oh, God help me,' cries his distracted mother.

Oh, God help me, small's the profit
You have been to me, you scamp!
Lounging by the hearth at home,
Grubbing in the charcoal embers;
Or, round all the country, frightening
Girls away from merry-makings—
Shaming me in all directions,
Fighting with the worst rascallions—

And so on. Yet, through it all, Peer vaguely feels within him something greater than he has yet realized—something nobler than the brute. He hints as much to Ase. Says he—

You are worth a better fate;
Better twenty thousand times!
Little, ugly, dear old mother,
You may safely trust my word!
All the parish shall exalt you!
Only wait till I have done
Something—something really grand!

The poor old body, out of her bitter experience, sneers at the bare idea of *his* doing something grand. If, she mutters, he would find the sense to darn his own breeches, it would turn her purgatory into para-

dise. But Peer, still gazing upon the vision of a *self* greater than he has yet realized, persists in his argument, and, at last, stuns his mother by a staggering proclamation. 'I will be an Emperor!' he cries. But, instead of cheering her, the statement only fills her with a new alarm. 'Oh, God comfort me,' she exclaims, 'for he's losing all the little wits he had!'

Peer has caught the intimations of a greater *self* within him. Another pair of eyes has made the same discovery. Just one person in the village sees something fine in Peer. Solveig is a simple country girl, and, whenever they meet, Peer treats her roughly: but she is not deceived by the treachery of outward appearances. She, too, sees in the actual wastrel the potential prince. At odd moments, when Peer is far away, little Solveig steals round to the cottage and begs Ase to tell her all about Peer. 'What, everything!' exclaims the old lady, in amazement. 'Why, you'd soon be tired!' 'Sooner by far will you tire of the telling than I of the hearing!' replies Solveig. We all know why: it is an old, old story, and all the lovelier on that account. Peer builds a hut in the snow-clad pinewoods; and Solveig, having broken her heart at leaving her father, her mother, and her little sister, comes to him, gliding noiselessly on her snow-shoes. But felicity is not so easily won. In that self-same hour, Peer's sins, in the shape of a woman with a child, come thundering at the door of the hut and, to escape

their hideous consequences, Peer forsakes Solveig, forsakes Ase, forsakes everything and flies across the seas.

IV

His experiences abroad constitute a romance of many colors. He makes money rapidly in America. No matter how. Among other things, he traffics largely in slaves; exports big cargoes of idols to China and rum to Africa; and, whenever such freight presents itself, sends shipments of missionaries and Bibles to all quarters of the globe. If the deeper *self*—the *self* that he has only partially realized—mutters in protest from its prison-house beneath the skin, Peer replies that the thing balances well. If there is any wrong in trading in slaves, idols, and rum, the situation is surely redeemed by the export of Bibles and missionaries! The explanation by no means satisfies him: but it silences that other *self*—the *self* that sometimes threatens to be mutinous.

Wealthy, Peer becomes a globe-trotter. We catch glimpses of him in many lands. But the crisis swoops down upon him in Egypt. He is visiting the Sphinx, and, under its shadow, meets a little German scholar—one Begriffenfeldt. 'Excuse me,' says the German, 'but what brings you here to-day?' The mischievous spirit again takes possession of Peer. 'Oh,' he replies, casually, 'I've just come to see an old friend!' The German looks around in

astonishment; but Peer points to the Sphinx. 'I knew him well in days gone by!' Peer declares. The German is in ecstasies. He has come to Egypt with this thing in mind—to identify the Sphinx! And to think that Peer actually knew him! How extremely fortunate!

'Dear me,' cries Begriffenfeldt in uncontrollable excitement.

My temples are hammering as though they would burst!
You know him, man! Answer! Say on! Can you tell what he is?

'Why, yes, that's easy enough,' replies the nonchalant Peer; 'he's *himself*!' The German sees in this cryptic saying a pearl of priceless wisdom. He jumps for joy. 'Ha!' he cries.

Ha, the riddle of life lightened forth
In a flash to my vision! It's certain he is himself!

Begriffenfeldt begs Peer to accompany him to the assembly of his *confrères* at Cairo, and to elucidate to them this illuminating *Philosophy of Self*. On arrival at Cairo, Peer discovers that Begriffenfeldt's colleagues are the inmates of a madhouse! They hail his *Philosophy of Self*, however, as a revelation received from heaven; they invest him with his title; he is the *Emperor of Himself*! And, prostrate in the dust before him, they offer him their homage!

It is all extremely whimsical, ludicrous, extravagant, grotesque! But, beneath the comedy, the

truth is there! A man is *himself*! It is the biggest thing about him! His name, his family, his health, his clothes, his education, his wealth, his age—these are the veriest details. The transcendent thing, the sublime thing, the thing that causes him to differ radically from every soul beside, the thing that really matters is—his *self*.

It is the one inevitable and inescapable fact of life. Peer could leave everything else behind him: he could be known by this name or by that: he could dress as an American millionaire or as a Turkish sultan: he could turn life into an endless series of transformation scenes: but one essential fact stared him in the face in every latitude and under all conditions: it was the fact of *self*. There it stood, stark and terrible: what was he making of it?

V

For, clearly, that *self*—the sublimest thing about him—was made for some purpose commensurate with its divinity and mystery. This is the whole burden of the book. In his *Lectures on Ibsenism*, Mr. P. H. Wicksteed says that *Peer Gynt* was written to show that *God meant something when He made each one of us*. That being so, it follows that the one thing that we are sent into the world to do is to translate that divine design into visible reality, as a builder translates the architect's dream into the stately structure that, tier upon tier, rises in grandeur before the admiring eyes of men. It

is toward the end of the book that the terrific implication of this thought is brought home to Peer. He is in conversation with the dreaded Button-Moulder—the most fearsome personage in the poem. The business of the Button-Moulder is to melt down and recast all useless things—the things that have failed to fulfill their purpose. He proposes to toss Peer into his furnace. Peer protests.

You're surely not meaning to melt me up
With Dick, Tom, and Hal into something new!

The Button-Moulder is relentless—

I have my orders.

Look, here it is written: Peer Gynt shalt thou summon:
He has set at Defiance his life's design.
Clap him into the ladle with other spoilt goods.

Peer begs for time: a respite is granted, not for Peer's sake, but for the sake of Another. That mystery will unfold itself later. Meanwhile, for the sake of one who loves him, Peer escapes the dreaded ladle.

Another discovery Peer makes, in some respects the saddest discovery of all. No *self* is made for itself. The Great Designer, in creating a *self*, plans for it a certain relationship to other *selves*. It follows that the *self* that, like Peer's *self*, remains unrealized and undeveloped, inflicts upon those other selves a serious deprivation: it throws both itself and them out of harmony with the eternal scheme of things.

As an old man, grizzled and spent, Peer thinks wistfully of his native land, and finding a ship sailing thither, he turns his face homeward. But, as the vessel draws near, he reflects on the loneliness of it all. His old friends will be dead, or, at least, dead to him, and he ponders on what might have been.

To have a whole bevy of youngsters at home;
Still to dwell in their minds as a coming delight;
To have others' thoughts follow you still on youth path!
There's never a soul gives a thought to me!

He looks round at the sailors, all looking forward to being with their wives and children as soon as the ship casts anchor. But no such joys are Peer Gynt's.

On landing, he visits the old familiar scenes and hears the gossip of the countryside about his old companions and about himself. But nobody knows him; nobody welcomes him; nobody loves him! At length he turns sadly into the lonely woods. It is Whit-Sunday morning and the church bells are ringing. At the door of a hut, he sees an old lady dressed for church, her psalm-book in one hand and her staff in the other. He looks closely. It is Solveig! She recognizes him and her joy knows no bounds. Peer craves her forgiveness. She assures him that there is nothing to forgive.

Thou hast made all my life as a beautiful song!
Blessed be thou that at last thou hast come!
Blessed, thrice blessed, our Whitsunmorn meeting!

All through the years she has carried in her heart, not the real Peer, but the ideal Peer. The *self* that he vaguely discerned in himself; the *self* that he never developed and realized; the *self* that, through the eyes of love, she saw so clearly—that *self* had remained with her all through the years and had sweetened every moment of her life. He has lived, she assures him, in her faith, in her hope, in her love, and now, to her unutterable joy, she holds him in her arms! Peer submits sadly to the sweetness of her fond caresses: in the love-light of her eyes he sees, more clearly than ever, the *self* that he has thrown away, the *self* that might have been.

Then a new wonder suddenly reveals itself. Beneath the magic of Solveig's love and joy and tears, that lost *self* starts to life, like a flower unfolding at the breath of spring. Peer becomes a new Peer—a transfigured Peer—a Peer with the seal of God upon his brow! The Button-Moulder reappears according to his threat. But he is satisfied that this new Peer will even yet fulfill, at least in part, the mission of his life, and vanishes without his victim.

VI

Through the pages of *Peer Gynt* a text runs like a refrain. It is this: *What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his real self?* The text is sometimes quoted and frequently suggested. It haunts Peer's mind when, in trying to excuse his traffic in slaves and rum and idols, he reflects

on his shipments of Bibles and missionaries. There is, he says to himself,

There is a text, or else a saying,
Somewhere, I don't remember where,
That if you gained the whole wide world,
But lost yourself, your gain were but
A withered flower, a cloven skull.
That is the text—or something like it;
And that remark is sober truth.

The same text is still running in Peer's mind as he paces the deck of the vessel that brings him back to his native land. He has gained the whole world! He has lost his real *self*! What doth it profit? What doth it profit?

My *self*, as we have seen, is the biggest thing about me. It is the transcendent thing, the sublime thing, the thing that causes me to differ radically from every soul beside. It is, indeed, the only thing that matters. Fancy guarding with sleepless vigilance the rest of life's poor treasure, and losing *that*!

VIII

ON SOWING HOPESEED

IN her *Glimpses of the Past*, Miss Elizabeth Wordsworth tells of a visit that she paid to Mrs. Selwyn, the widow of the great Doctor Selwyn, the pioneer Bishop of New Zealand. Miss Wordsworth began to talk a little dismally about the world and his wife—shocking sinners, both of them!

‘Ah, my dear,’ replied the gentle old lady, ‘*you must sow a little hopeseed!*’ The Bishop was a great believer in *sowing hopeseed*. There’s *Faith*, you know, and *Hope* and *Charity*,’ ticking each of them off on her soft and wrinkled fingers as she spoke. ‘Well, we say a great deal about *Faith*, and a great deal about *Charity*; but poor *Hope*, somehow, gets left out in the cold!’

Now, since this little world began, Hope has been portrayed under an extraordinary wealth of imagery. How we delighted, as children, in the old-world story of Pandora and the fascinating box of mystery! Would Pandora, defying the commands of Epimetheus, lift the lid of the tantalizing box? We hoped she would, for our curiosity was as great as hers. And she did! And out flew all the troubles that have since distressed mankind. And, last of all, out flew Hope, a fairy elfish thing, all made of sunshine, with

rainbow-tinted wings. Its mission, it explained, was to make amends for all the mischief that the other creatures must inflict, and straightway kissing the inflamed spot on Pandora's forehead where one of the hideous pests had stung her, the pain magically vanished, and Pandora felt it no more.

One is tempted to descant upon Bunyan's golden anchor—the golden anchor that, hanging on the walls of the Palace Beautiful, so captivated the eyes of Christiana and her sons that the Sisters of the Palace made them a present of it. And it would certainly be pleasant to discuss the profound significance of the familiar painting by G. F. Watts. In most of our homes there hang copies of the famous picture in which Hope is portrayed as a female figure seated upon the globe, bending fondly over her broken harp. The light is dim and uncertain; but she is blind to the gloom, for her eyes are bandaged. Only one string of the harp remains; but to that single string she applies her skilful fingers, a look of infinite wistfulness and expectancy lighting up her gentle face. One string remains, but there is *one*; and, that being so, she bravely resolves to flood the world with melody.

But, beautiful as are all such images, I turn from them to-day without regret. I am like the child who, on catching sight of a new toy that takes his fancy, drops the playthings that have so often charmed him. For this new thought—the thought of Mrs. Selwyn's hopeseed—completely holds my mind. In contrast

with harps and anchors, and all the time-honored symbols of hope, this new phrase has in it the suggestion of life and of *life more abundant*. Hopeseed! Seed is the world's oldest and divinest mystery. A sower is a man with a basket of miracles on his arm. The very thought of seed fills the imagination with visions of secret fructification and endless multiplication. I feel instinctively that if, following Mrs. Selwyn's advice, I can contrive to scatter a little hope-seed, it will soon fill my garden with beauty and fragrance, and will spread to all the gardens up the street.

And the best of this new symbol is that it finds its vindication in the eternal order of things. Hope deserves to be allied, not with inanimate things like harps and anchors, but with things that live and flourish and propagate their kind. Hope belongs to God's great out-of-doors, to the sea and the earth and the sky, to the lofty hills and the laughing valleys, to the fields and the woods and the streams. Nature, as Dr. G. H. Morrison has eloquently pointed out, is instinct with hope. 'Every seed cast into the ground is big with hopefulness of harvest. Every sparrow in the winter ivy is quivering with hope of its nest and its younglings. Every burn that rises in the lonely hills, and that goes brawling over the granite of the glen, is rejoicing in the hope of its union with the sea. Winter comes with iciness and misery, but in the heart of winter is the hope of spring. Spring comes, tripping across the meadow,

and in the heart of spring there is the hope of summer. Summer comes, garlanded with beauty, and in the heart of summer is the hope of autumn, when sower and reaper shall rejoice together. The very word *natura* means something going to be born. A woman in travail is a woman agitated by a wonderful hope. Nature is the supreme revelation of the amazing hopefulness of God.' Mrs. Selwyn has done us good service, therefore, in bringing the whole subject into the open air. Even the rooms of the Palace Beautiful get a little stuffy at times, and it becomes difficult to interpret Hope worthily in that close atmosphere; but out here, amidst the perfume of roses, the song of thrushes and the murmur of bees, one begins to understand.

And, now that I look back across the years from this angle, it seems to me that the choicest, sweetest, sanest, and most lovable people I have ever known have been the people who have constantly filled their pockets with hopeseed and who have taken care to keep a hole in every pocket. I am not thinking of the good folk who go through life with a fixed, and somewhat exasperating, smile, bidding us, even in our bleakest and bitterest moments, to look on the bright side of things. In his 'In Memoriam,' Tennyson has told us how, in the hour of his desolating bereavement, these well-meaning optimists tortured him beyond endurance. No, no; I am not speaking of tares: I am speaking of wheat; for, just as there can never be wheat without tares, so there can never

be hopeseed without a spurious imitation of hope-seed.

Kingsley has pilloried one of these offenders in the pages of his *Water-babies*. We all remember old Dennis. The visiting angler, laden with rod and basket, consults him as to the chances of a good day's sport.

'Are there salmon here, Dennis?'

'Salmon, yer honor? Why, cartloads of them; regiments of them; the fish are fair shouldering each other out of the water!'

Elated at this exciting prospect, the angler soon settles down to business, whipping the stream all day without getting a rise. Re-crossing the fields in the sunset, he again meets Dennis.

'There are no salmon there, Dennis,' he exclaims, a trifle testily: 'and, in fact, there can't be, for if a fish came up last tide, he'd be gone to the higher pools by now.'

'Shure, then, yer honor's the thrue fisherman and understands it all like a book!'

'But, Dennis, you said that the salmon were shouldering each other out of the water!'

'Shure,' replied Dennis, with a delicious smile, a wicked twinkle in his sly gray eye, 'and didn't I think that yer honor would like a *pleasant answer*?'

Anybody can see at a glance that poor Dennis had it in his heart to sow a little hopeseed about the world, but, unfortunately, he had not carefully tested the contents of his basket. He was sowing some-

thing that closely resembled hopeseed, just as the tares closely resemble wheat, but the counterfeit hopeseed was destined to produce a pitiful harvest of disappointment and discontent. That is the worst of the people with the set smile, the people whose only conception of hopefulness is to give you a *pleasant answer*, whether the facts of the case justify that pleasant answer or not. They work like penny-in-the-slot machines. You drop in the tale of your troubles: you draw out an assurance that all's well: and you go away with the click of the machine still ringing in your ears. It is *too* automatic.

There are people, on the other hand, who display a rare skill in sowing hopeseed. It is said of Lord Shaftesbury that he had an extraordinary genius for convincing criminals that their career of lawlessness was merely a temporary lapse from the path of rectitude. The most hardened gaol-birds felt, after a chat with him, that a life of honor and integrity lay before them, and they often anticipated that fresh phase with passionate enthusiasm. How often has a boy carved his way to fame because of his intense consciousness that somebody *expected* him to become great? Somebody had sowed a little hopeseed in his heart: somebody had fired his boyish ambition: somebody's eyes were upon him: and the boy went out into the world feeling that, at any cost, somebody's dream must be translated into actuality. I have just laid down the *Life of Laurence Sterne*, and the book furnishes me with a case in point.

Laurence Sterne was a member of an extraordinary family. They were incessantly on the move. They seem to have gone into a place; stayed there until a child had been born and a child buried; and then jogged on again. He would be a bold historian who would declare, with any approach to dogmatism, how many babies were born and buried in the course of these nomadic gipsyings. They seem to have lived for a year or so in all sorts of towns and villages, and, with pitiful monotony, we read of their regret at having to leave such-and-such a child sleeping in the churchyard. 'My father's children,' as Sterne himself observes, 'were not made to last long.' Laurence himself, however, was one of the lucky ones.

At the age of ten, having survived the jaunts and jolts to which the wanderings of the family exposed him, he was 'fixed' in a school at Halifax, and was profoundly impressed by the conviction of his Yorkshire schoolmaster that he was destined to become a distinguished man. The good dominie lost no opportunity of sowing hopeseed in his pupil's heart by speaking of his certainty on this point. On one occasion the ceiling of the schoolroom was being white-washed. The ladder was left against the wall. 'One unlucky day,' says Sterne, 'I mounted that ladder, seized the brush, and wrote my name in large capital letters high up on the wall. For this offence the usher thrashed me severely. But the master was angry with him for doing so, and declared that the

name on the wall should never be erased. For, he added, I was a boy of genius, and would one day become famous, and he should then look with pride on the letters on the schoolroom wall. These words made me forget the cruel blows that I had just received.' The words did more. They implanted a glorious hope in the boy's breast: they inspired efforts that he would never otherwise have made: they account, in large measure, for his phenomenal success.

If the schoolmaster who welcomed the awkward little ten-year-old in 1723 lived, by any chance, until 1760, he must have felt that his handful of hope-seed had produced a most bounteous harvest. For, in 1760, *Tristram Shandy* took the country by storm. It was chaotic: it was incoherent: it was an audacious defiance of all the conventions: but it was irresistible. Its originality, its grotesque oddity, its rippling whimsicality set everybody chuckling. Immediately after its publication, Sterne went up to London. He was the lion of the hour. His lodgings in Pall Mall were besieged from morning to night. 'My rooms,' he writes, 'are filling every hour with great people of the first rank who vie with each other in heaping honors upon me.' Never before had a literary venture elicited such homage. And when, a few months later, he crossed the Channel, a similar banquet of adulation awaited him in France. He was instantly enthroned in the charmed circle of the salons. 'My head is turned,' he writes to Garrick; and indeed it

might well have been. The old schoolmaster's hope-seed was springing up in waggon-loads—a plenteous harvest indeed.

And the best of sowing hopeseed is that it will take root anywhere. Unlike the seed in the parable, you may sow it by the wayside, or on the stony places, or among the thorns; it does not matter. Hopeseed will flourish in any soil. I recently spent a very pleasant hour in the famous Mission Hall at Water Street, New York City. Every reader of *Down in Water Street* knows how striking and sensational were many of the conversions there recorded. Some of the most notorious drunkards and criminals of New York were transformed through the instrumentality of the Water Street Mission. When Jerry McAuley was asked how he accounted for the phenomenal success of his wonderful work, he replied, 'We never abandon hope of anyone!' He never gave a man up. Many a poor wretch would come, profess conversion, sign the pledge, testify in public to the change that he had experienced, and then, after a few weeks or a few months, relapse into a debauchery more disgusting than that from which he had been rescued. The dog returned to its vomit and the sow to its wallowing in the mire. But at Water Street nobody scolded. There was never a word of reproach. The prodigal was enticed back to the Mission, and was treated with unvarying affection and respect. His best self was appealed to. He was assured that he would be a good and great and upright man in spite

of everything. The very feeling that he did not deserve such confidence compelled him to pull himself together. Sometimes these dreadful lapses were twenty times repeated; but nobody lost heart. Every redeemed and reformed citizen who emerged triumphant from the doors of the Water Street Mission was a monument to the dauntless hopefulness of the workers there. The reed might be terribly bruised; they would never break it. The flax might be smouldering hopelessly; they would never quench it. And, as a consequence, the reed at last gave out unfaltering music; and the flax burned with a steady lustre. And thus, according to the word of the prophet, they brought forth judgment unto victory.

As a rule, hopeseed is sown by women. I heard yesterday a good criticism of Sir Luke Fildes' great painting, *The Doctor*. Oddly enough, the critic was a medical man. Everybody knows the picture—the physician bending anxiously over the child; the mother sitting in the background with her face buried in her arms, which rest upon the table; and the father standing gloomily awaiting the doctor's verdict. 'It is a very good picture,' said this medical critic, 'but untrue to life. In the course of a thirty years' practice, I have never seen a mother bow her head and give up while a breath was left in her child's body.' The criticism is sound. Women are gallant hoppers. They never give us up, however sick or sinful we may be. And it is largely this refusal

to abandon hope that lures us back to life and goodness.

‘A woman never gives up,’ said my doctor friend, ‘as long as a breath remains in her child’s body.’ He might have gone further. She declines to give up, even when the last breath leaves. She goes on pilgrimage to the grave, and, watering it with her tears, she sows her hopeseed there. So do all who share her secret. One of the great romances of missionary enterprise is the *Life of Adoniram Judson*. Judson buried his wife and his entire family in Burmah. The grave was under a hope-tree and the heartbroken man saw a wealth of significance in that fact. ‘They rest together *under the hope-tree*,’ he says, again and again, in his *Journal* and in his letters. If the brave triumphal message of the New Testament means anything, there is always a hope-tree scattering its showers of hopeseed into a fruitful soil in which a Christian sleeps.

IX

THE LAND OF DREAMS

I

DREAMS, they say, go by contrary; and, incredible as it may seem, although *they say* it, it is true! Here, for example, is Mungo Park out in the dry and dusty desert, his tongue swollen with thirst and his feet blistered by contact with the burning sand. Coming upon a clump of scraggy shrubs, he throws his exhausted frame beneath their shade and falls asleep. And, sleeping, he dreams. He dreams of purling streams and gushing fountains; and of noble rivers on whose green, green banks the most luscious fruit is growing.

Here is Captain Ejnar Mikkelsen! The gallant Dane was intrusted, as all the world knows, with the command of the expedition sent out to recover the bodies, and, if possible, the journals, of the Danish explorers, Mylius Erichsen and Hoeg Hagen and the Eskimo Bronlund, who perished in northeast Greenland in 1907. Leaving the rest of their party in June, 1909, Captain Mikkelsen and Engineer Iversen plunged into the frozen silences of the white North. For nearly two years and a half nothing further was heard of them. Indeed, the wonder is that they

escaped with their lives. Death many times stared them in the face; and on one memorable occasion they had shot their last dog and eaten the last morsel that their little store could furnish. In his *Lost in the Arctic*, Captain Mikkelsen tells of the nerve-shattering ordeals through which he and his brave companion passed. He speaks of the paralyzing intensity of the arctic cold, of their increasing anxiety about provisions, and of the weird silence and maddening monotony of the snowy desolations amidst which those interminable months were passed. Very often, Captain Mikkelsen says, their sinews ached with exhaustion, their brains reeled with delirium, and their hearts were in the grip of a cold despair. 'We staggered on,' he adds, 'with a hopeless, childish feeling of infinite bitterness and loneliness.' But even when their situation was most desperate they found occasional relief in sleep. And sleep brought dreams. And, as surely as these starving men slept and dreamed, they dreamed of roaring fires and savory dishes and cozy couches, and all the delights of home, sweet home!

And here is Sir Douglas Mawson, our own Australian explorer! He is in the depths of the antarctic; has lost both his companions; and, in his lonely struggle, has little hope of fighting his way to safety. Again and again he stumbles at some particularly perilous place; several time he falls into crevasses; but each time he contrives to extricate himself from the danger-zone and battle on. 'I never really slept,'

he says, 'but now and then I dozed; and, as surely as I did so, I was tormented by dreams of the most luxurious food and visions of the most impossible banquets.'

Here, then, is the tantalizing cruelty of dreams! They go by contrary. Mungo Park, dying of thirst, dreams of sparkling fountains and babbling streams; Ejnar Mikkelsen, dying of cold, dreams of roaring fires and cozy couches; Sir Douglas Mawson, exhausted by hunger, dreams of the most sumptuous banquet! Longfellow has depicted the same peculiarity in his *Slave's Dream*. The dying slave, bleeding from the driver's lashes, dreams that he is a king; his dark-eyed queen beside him; his children clasping his neck and kissing his hand.

Now, all this is extremely interesting; and it is extremely interesting because it reflects, not only a great *psychological* problem, but a great *practical* problem. It is the problem of double consciousness. A man may be miserable and merry at the same time. It is impossible to interpret the world in which we live unless we have clearly grasped that vital fact.

Now glance again at these four sleepers, and, when you have done so, I will ask you a question! And, however you answer my question, I shall tell you that your answer is wrong! This gallant Scotsman out in the burning desert, dreaming of dripping fountains and flowing streams; this sturdy Dane, lost amidst arctic snows, dreaming of a snug commodious fire-side; this solitary figure, enveloped in antarctic bliz-

zards, dreaming of turtle soup, oyster patties, noble sirloins, appetizing salads, and delicious fruits; this dying slave, dreaming of regal splendor and domestic bliss; are they miserable or are they merry? Are they to be pitied or are they to be envied? That is the question; and, however you answer that question, I shall contradict you!

Concentrating your attention on his emaciated condition and his cheerless environment, you tell me that this starving sleeper is of all men most miserable; you think that he is to be heartily pitied. You are mistaken. For—to quote another of the things *they say* and say correctly—ignorance is bliss. This man may be hungry, but he is ignorant of his hunger. He knows nothing about his emaciated condition, his cheerless environment or his danger of starvation. He is enjoying a glorious banquet; and few men on the planet are more satisfied and happy than is he.

Or, focusing all your thought upon his dreams, and noting the smile that flits over his sleeping face, you tell me that this man is one of the merriest of mortals; you think that his happiness is to be envied. I turn upon you angrily. How can you talk such nonsense? The hunger is real; the happiness is woven of the stuff that dreams are made of. The man is at the point of death! If you have emotions to be moved, you will allow this pathetic spectacle to stir them; if you have tears, you will shed them in the presence of suffering like this!

Whichever way you answer my question, you are

wrong, hopelessly wrong; and whichever way you answer it, you are right, indisputably right. For each of these four men is, at one and the same time, miserable and merry. So are all men. But it's getting stuffy in here; let us go out for a walk!

II

And here we are upon the street! We have scarcely got into our stride when a neatly attired lady, whose pleasing face evidently reflects the genuine goodness of her soul, approaches us, and, with modest hesitancy and a gracious smile, hands us a tract. We thank her and pause for just a moment to glance at it. It is entitled: *Warned in Time!* and is embellished by an arresting picture of a blind man nearing the edge of a precipice. In the course of a cursory perusal my eye catches the phrase, 'Man is a guilty, lost, and miserable sinner.' I close the pamphlet carefully and slip it into my pocket. That is enough to go on with. 'Man is miserable.' Is he?

Suddenly, I meet two girls. They are both pretty—one dark and one fair—and are daintily frocked, the one in white, the other in pink. I have no idea what they are talking about, but they are laughing gaily, and the ripple of their merriment is an enrichment to the street. I think of the tract in my pocket. 'Man is miserable.' Is he? A few yards further on I meet a young fellow in a straw hat and navy-blue suit. The hat is tilted back; he carries a cigarette in his fingers; and, as he passes me, I catch from his

lips two or three syllables of a haunting popular air. I again think of the tract in my pocket; but it is only a flash this time; for, just behind the youth with the straw hat, there comes a tall lad in gray, with a girl in a muslin dress. They are arm-in-arm; they are lost to everything but each other; and a heaven of love shines in their eyes. A third time I think of the tract in my pocket. 'Is man miserable?' I ask myself, 'is he? *is he?*'

We reach the gates of the public gardens. Just outside, a newsboy is shouting his papers. We buy one and turn into the gardens to read it. A seat near the fountain seems waiting for us. We glance at the gold fish for a moment, and then sit down and open the paper.

'I say!' exclaims my companion, abruptly, 'this is very wonderful, you know,' and he points to a column headed: 'Remarkable Invention: London and New York startled!'

'My dear fellow,' I reply, 'it's *all* very wonderful. The news itself is wonderful. The fact that in a few minutes it can be cabled out from London to us in Australia is wonderful. The printing of the paper is wonderful. The fact that we can read and understand it is wonderful. Every paragraph is wonderful. It's all about man's wealth and his literature and his art and his music. It reveals the range of his intellect, the audacity of his adventures, the miracles of his science, the marvel of his inventions, the un-resting march of his discoveries. It makes you feel

that man is a conqueror. He reads the secrets of the stars; he wrests the records from the rocks; he rides above the clouds; he whispers across the world; he sails beneath the seas; he flings his messages into infinite space. He can do anything!

And once more there flashes into my mind the thought of the tract in my pocket. 'Man is miserable—a miserable sinner!' I take out the tract; fold it and the newspaper together; rise; and we set out for home.

And, on the way home, it occurs to me that the tract and the newspaper are each afflicted by a blind spot. The tract sees the haggard face and emaciated form of the sleeper on the sand; it is concerned about his hunger; it knows nothing of his dreams. The newspaper, on the contrary, is full of his dreams, but says nothing of his hunger. The tract and the newspaper are both right; the tract and the newspaper are both wrong. As the tract would lead you to suppose, man is dreadfully hungry. And, as the newspaper suggests, he is deliriously happy. He is terribly hungry and tremendously happy at the same time.

The fact is that his dreams arise from his hunger. These sleepers on the hot sand and in the cold snow would not be dreaming of feasts and banquets but for the starvation that is really threatening them with a tragic death. The gnawing emptiness of which they are conscious when awake, and the radiant visions that they witness when asleep, are both the outcome

of their fearful hunger. Man's dreams are sublime—as the newspaper conclusively proves. But they emanate, though unconsciously, from hunger. He vaguely feels that he was made to be a king, a conqueror. The divine mandate '*Have thou dominion!*' has been ringing in his ears for ages. He knows that he is but a shadow of the creature he was meant to be. He is taunted by the thought of his vanished glory. He hankers for the crown that has fallen from his brow. And, all through the centuries, he has struggled with hand and heart and brain to recapture his forfeited supremacy. He longs for dominion over earth and sea and sky; he yearns to conquer the universe and to harness all its latent forces; he is always dreaming the most bewildering and golden dreams, but his dreams are invariably the outcome of his heart's deep hunger.

III

The man who, like the tract, recognizes the *hunger* but ignores the *dreams*, must inevitably become morbid and pessimistic. That is why so much of our religion is depressing, unconvincing, and unreal. It is out of touch with the girls in pink and white, whose silvery laughter gladdened the pavement; it is out of touch with the song that the fellow in the straw hat was singing; it is out of touch with the happy lovers who found heaven on earth in each other's society; it is out of touch with the newspaper that we read together in the gardens.

The man who, like the newspaper, recognizes the *dreams* but ignores the *hunger*, will lack seriousness, and will fail to feel the pathos and gravity of life. His optimism will be a giggling optimism. That is why so much of our religion is vapid, sentimental, superficial. Depend upon it, there are moments when these two girls in pink and white forget their laughter, forget each other, forget everything, and find themselves peering into the empty void of their own hearts—and *wondering*! They wonder about God; they wonder about eternity; they wonder what it is that they need to make life's happiness complete. Depend upon it, there are times when this young fellow in the straw hat sits in silence, his lilting song forgotten, and thinks thoughts that do lie too deep for tears. Depend upon it, too, these happy lovers—architects of a rainbow-tinted morrow—often feel that, to make that magic future all that heart can wish, they need *something*—they scarcely know *what*—that earth with all its treasure cannot supply. Anybody who really knows these girls in pink and white, this fellow in the straw hat and these enchanted lovers, knows that, underlying all their gaiety, is a vague but ceaseless craving. There is *hunger* underneath their *dreams*.

Now it is the church's business to awaken these blissful sleepers. But is it kind to bring them back? Why dispel the illusion of abundance by recalling them to their gnawing need? It would certainly be a mockery and a shame for anyone *but the church* to

do it. But the church can do it with a good conscience for the simple reason that she is in a position to satisfy the hunger, and help to a fulfilment of the dreams. The church exists to give men the Saviour for whom their hearts are hungry; and, beneath the spell of his authority, they can realize their dreams. It does seem a shame to silence, even for a moment, the rippling laughter of these two happy girls; the young fellow in the straw hat stares in amazement as you press upon his attention the things that matter most; our pair of sweethearts do not know what to make of the new thoughts to which you introduce them. But, to use the words of the prophet, *'It is as when an hungry man dreameth and behold he eateth, but he awaketh and his soul is empty.'* These light-hearted young people whom we met upon the street swiftly recognize that it was for the Saviour of whom you speak that, all unconsciously, their hearts were secretly aching. And, having found satisfaction in him, the laughter of the girls in pink and white will be deeper and richer; the song of the young fellow in the straw hat will be fuller and more blithe; whilst the love of the couple arm-in-arm will be sweetened and sanctified by the entrance into their hearts—and into their home—of the love divine.

PART II

I

THE BROKEN CHAIN

I

You may judge a man, they say, by the company he keeps. The statement is ridiculous upon the face of it. The best often consort with the worst. When I hear men say that you may tell a man by the company he keeps, there rush to my mind visions of Josephine Butler gathering about her the most hopeless outcasts of European womanhood, of Lord Shaftesbury among the burglars and pickpockets of a thieves' kitchen, and of One whose personality was always most engaging when He found himself surrounded by publicans and sinners. No, no; a man is not to be judged by the company he keeps; he is to be judged by the company that *he would like to keep*—the company that form his own set—the company in which he would be most perfectly at home. Therein lies the significance of that pregnant record in the Acts of the Apostles: *being let go, they went to their own company*. That is the crucial test. It is a very difficult thing to know if my neighbor is a good man or a bad man. It is a much more difficult and—to me—a much more important thing to know if I myself am a good man or a bad man. How can I tell? In this way: A man is what he is when, all the

restraints and obligations of life being removed, he gravitates towards his own. Break the chain and see which way he goes! A man is what he is when he is *let go*.

II

It is a revelation of the *Relationships of Life*. Everything stands related to something else. Everything has *its own company*; yet it is not easy to see—from the outward appearance and immediate environment of each thing—to what set or class or company that particular thing belongs. In a certain museum, Henry Drummond says, there stand side by side on the same shelf two small boxes filled with earth. A low mountain in Arran has furnished the first; the contents of the second come from the Island of Barbadoes. When examined with a pocket lens, the Arran earth is found to be full of small objects, clear as crystal, fashioned by some mysterious geometry into forms of exquisite symmetry. The substance is silica, a natural glass; and the prevailing shape is a six-sided prism capped at either end by little pyramids modelled with consummate grace. The contents of the second box are very similar. Indeed, chemically, the material is the same. The only difference is that the angles of pyramid and prism have given place to curved lines. The appearance is that of a vast collection of microscopic urns, goblets, and vases. Each tiny urn is chiselled into the most faultless proportion, and the whole presents a vision of

magic beauty. 'Judged by the standard of their loveliness,' says Professor Drummond, 'there is little to choose between these two sets of objects. Yet there is one cardinal difference between them. They belong to different worlds. The last belongs to the living world, the former to the dead. The first are crystals, the last are shells.' The crystals, that is to say, belong to the realm of the inanimate. If they went to *their own company*, they would go to all the masses of lifeless mineral that litter the face of the planet. The shells, on the other hand, belong to the land of the living. If they went to *their own company*, they would join the host of things that creep and run and swim and fly, the things that think and feel and see and know. Lying in their boxes side by side, these two sets of things appear very much alike, but let them go to *their own company*? You will then behold them as citizens of different worlds; they possess scarcely anything in common.

It is never safe to judge a man by the company he keeps. He may no more belong to that company than the shells belong to the crystals or the crystals to the shells. Here, on a seat beside the pilgrim road, two men are resting side by side! They seem a pair. But wait until they rise and resume their trudge! You will then see that they turn their faces in opposite directions. One is on his way to the Celestial City: the other is bound for the City of Destruction. *Being let go*, you are astonished at the essential and fundamental difference between them. Here are two

drunkards staggering home at night! Their cases appear identical. Yet what if, day after day, one of them is wretchedly yielding himself to his besetment, whilst the other is fighting desperately against it? Here are three crosses side by side—*on either side one and Jesus in the midst!* A casual visitor to Jerusalem, passing by, would include all three sufferers in one classification. But if they were *let go* you would see to what different companies they belong. Propinquity is no evidence of affinity. Companionship does not indicate kinship.

III

It is a revelation of the *Restraints of Life*. *Being let go, they went to their own company*. They would have sought that company earlier but for the restraints to which they were subjected. We are all held by similar chains. We none of us say the things that we feel like saying or do the things that we feel like doing. We submit ourselves to a severe curb. Owing to the restraints imposed upon our goodness, we are not as good as we should like to be. We are conscious of good impulses—impulses that reflect our best selves—but we seldom carry them into execution. We are restrained by the example of others; or by the fear of disapproval; or by counting the cost; or by any one of a thousand considerations. Again, we are none of us as bad as we should like to be. We are living in a good world, and the restraints on evil are incomparably greater than the restraints

on goodness. It may be difficult for a good man to be as good as he would like to be; but it is infinitely harder for a bad man to be as bad as he would like to be. A bad man is driving recklessly downhill; but there is always a chain on the wheel. His badness is held in check by memory, by conscience, by reason, by fear, and by a host of other powerful protectors. His very name is a restraint. Booker Washington, born in slavery, declares that white people do not recognize what they owe to the possession of names. Slaves have no surnames. As a consequence, their virtues reflect no distinction upon their relatives, and their vices cast no disgrace. Under civilized conditions it is otherwise. Every deed that a man performs reflects honor or discredit upon all who bear his name. Such a restraint is of incalculable value. It moves every good man to be a little better than he would otherwise be, and it prevents every bad man from being quite as bad, without doubt, as he would like to be.

So does the law of the land. Lots of us are paragons of virtue because of the wholesome dread that we cherish of the policeman. We are restrained, too, by the judgment of society. We do the decent thing because it is considered correct. This is what Bacon meant by his *Idol of the Tribe*; it is what Nietzsche meant by his *Law of Moral Mimicry*. We conform to other people's standards in spite of our own strong inclinations. We are not wild horses careering about the prairie: we are broken in and driven through life

with bit and bridle: restraint is imposed upon us at every turn.

IV

It is a revelation of the *Releases of Life*. *Being let go*, they went to their own company. A thing only betrays its real character when the restraint is removed. In reality it is only perfectly natural when it is *let go*.

I went to a cricket match the other day. After playing a brilliantly fine innings, a popular batsman mishit a fast bumping ball and it soared swiftly skywards. The man fielding at cover-point turned and ran rapidly under it, his eyes on the ball. But why? The ball had gone up among the birds—up towards the stars! But the man at cover-point knew that the ball had no real affinity with birds and stars. He knew that it belonged to the realm of mundane things and that, *being let go* from the force that propelled it upward, it would return to *its own company*.

Or suppose that a visitor from Mars were to visit the earth and ask me what a boy is like 'Come with me,' I say; and I take him to the nearest school. There we see rows and rows of boys, all in perfect order, speaking only when they are questioned, and looking as if butter would scarcely melt in their mouths. Could our celestial visitant form any true estimate of boy-nature under such circumstances? But suppose that, during our sojourn at the school, the recess bell rings. The boys are *let go* and stream out into the

playground. It is the release that brings the revelation.

Or here are two clerks working side by side at the same desk! Nobody can tell their tastes and tendencies as they bend over their ledgers; but wait until closing time! At five o'clock they will be *let go*. During the evening, each will follow his bent without let or hindrance. Leisure is life's great revealer.

There were saints, Paul says, in the household of Nero. They were probably slaves. When on duty, they seemed part and parcel of those orgies of hideous vice and unrestrained licentiousness by which the court of Nero was disfigured. But, every now and again, they were *let go*. Like an arrow from a bow, they went to *their own company*. They hurried to the catacombs; blended their voices with the chorus of praise and intercession; took upon their lips the sacred mysteries that symbolized the broken body and the shed blood of their divine Redeemer; and prayed with intensity and fervor that the scenes that they daily witnessed at the palace might leave no taint upon their devotion.

Judas sat with John at that sacred supper which is the most memorable meal in the world's history. Together they ate; together they drank; together they listened to the words of grace that fell from the lips of Jesus. John was *of* the company; Judas was *in* it but not *of* it. *Being let go, he went to his own company*—and sold his Lord for thirty pieces of silver! It does not follow, because men sit together

at a communion service, that they are like-minded and like-hearted. The one may be there—as John was there—because he loved to be; the other may be there—as Judas was there—under restraint. It is a case of the crystals and the shells over again: they look alike; yet a world of difference yawns between them. *Being let go*, they will seek *their own company*; that is the test.

V

As I pondered this theme last night, I nodded in my chair. I was tired; the fire was sending out a genial glow; the chair was comfortable; and my companions were reading in silence. As soon as I lost touch with the things about me, there came to me two visions—a Vision of Heaven and a Vision of Hell. When, a minute or two later, a coal fell from the grate and awoke me, I told my companions of my dream.

‘And what was it all like?’ asked one of them. ‘Was Heaven a city of golden streets, and Hell a place of fire and brimstone?’

‘No,’ I replied, ‘the heaven and hell of my dream were very much alike. Indeed, both were very like this world of ours. But there was this difference. The one was inhabited by all those who, in this world, had sincerely sought to love God and follow Christ, but who, in this world, had never been able to attain the goodness that they so ardently coveted. But there—in that new world—their aspirations were

hampered by no restraints. Their conduct was not held in check by unsympathetic companions; all suggestions and temptations that tended to evil had been removed; they were *let go*, and were, at last, entirely surrounded by *their own company*. Their purity was perfect and their happiness complete.'

'And the other place?' pressed my companion, 'what of that?'

'The same principle applied,' I answered. 'I saw the wicked of this world, but with no restraint upon their wickedness. They were no longer checked by the presence of good men, or the operation of good laws, or the fear of soiling a good name. All restraint had gone. They were *let go*. He that was unjust could be unjust still; he that was filthy could be filthy still. There was nothing to remind the unjust of the beauty of justice, and nothing to remind the filthy of the loveliness of purity. Hatred, jealousy, pride, and all evil passions, were unchained and unleashed. Every man was *let go* and had gone to *his own company*. It was a Vision of Hell far more terrible than anything of which I had ever conceived.'

VI

But, returning to realities, there remains one word to be said. The soul has patriotisms, loyalties, and affinities of its own; but they are not of necessity final. They can be changed. In his *First Men in the Moon*, Mr. H. G. Wells tells of a magic chemical by means of which Cavor and his companion could

neutralize and nullify the attraction of any particular world. The glass globe in which they sailed had curtains saturated in this chemical. The airmen had but to draw those curtains on the side nearest the world on which they found themselves, and they instantly floated off into space. By an adjustment of the curtains they could navigate their weird machine to any sphere they chose. It is an allegory. The attachments of the soul are not final. I may draw a magic curtain and be free from the magnetisms that have bound me. The New Testament is particularly explicit at this point. When the Prodigal son gathered all together and took his journey into a far country, he went to *his own company*. Being *let go*, he flung off the restraints of home, and lost himself among companions of his own choosing. But, with the disillusionment of the years, his heart swung back to the old roof-tree. He shook himself free from the vicious restraints of the far country, as he had formerly shaken himself free from the virtuous restraints of his father's house. He returned to his home. The company that he had once repudiated became *his own company* after all. A golden evangel lies crystallized just there.

II

DAFFODILS

THE daffodils are the natural representatives of all those things that, good themselves, promise other things still better.

When mother sets the table-cloth
With all her pretty ware,
The children know she plights her troth;
There's dinner in the air!

So all our fears our Father stills
In Springtime's chilly morn,
The God who sends us daffodils
Will not forget the corn.

I am writing on the first day of spring. At least, it is the first day of spring *to me*. For, to me, spring begins—whatever the almanac may say—on the day on which, after months of scribbling in my study, I bring my table out on to the lawn, set it under the shade of the wattle that is now golden with blossom, and spread my paper under the canopy of the blue, blue skies. Looking around me, I see on every hand preparations for what Mr. Hilaire Belloc finely calls 'Nature's superb adventure.' If my theme is threadbare, that is not my fault. *I* did not wear it out. I decline, therefore, to be penalized by the imposition of an unjust silence.

In one of his best novels, Mark Rutherford credits Doctor Turnbull with the sage dictum that the condition of that man is hopeless who finds no delight in the glories of Springtime. 'When,' observes the doctor, 'when people have no pleasure in living, when they do not find that food and light and air are pleasant, it is of no use to argue; they are out of health!' The real significance of this expert opinion lies in its assumption that the gladness of springtime is the joy of being alive. The assumption is sound. The ecstasy and intentness with which we watch the arrival of the swallows, the gilding of the wattle, the dancing of the daffodils, the robing of the poplars, and all the familiar signs of the vernal season, is simply an essential phase of our passionate love of living. Man is in love with life; and every manifestation of the thing that is so dear to him gladdens his eyes and captivates his fancy. When he is tired of daffodils, he is ready for his long rest. 'If,' sings Miss Teresa Hooley,

"If I should ever wax so old and weary
That, when Spring comes, my heart would fail to thrill
To the first white wind-flower waking in the copice,
Or the tossing gold of the first daffodil,
Then, Lord, of Thy infinite pity, stoop and take me
Home to Thy heaven, to cleanse and make me whole.
Blind to Thy beauty, should I care to linger—
Life in my limbs and grey death in my soul?"

Once a year we are all privileged to gaze with open eyes upon the obviously miraculous. However

commonplace the year may be, it holds for each of us at least one month of marvels. One of the most effective passages in George Gissing's *Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* describes a farm and an orchard mantled in the exquisite comeliness of spring. The apple-trees are in full bloom; the air is redolent with a score of delicious perfumes; the green banks and the gay fruit-trees are choral with the hum of bees and the songs of birds; from the distant pastures comes up the bleating of the lambs. 'How many more Springs can I hope to see?' asks Ryecroft sadly. 'Five or six, perhaps. Five or six, welcomed joyously, lovingly watched from the first celandine to the budding of the rose. Five or six times *the miracle of earth reclad*, the vision of splendor and loveliness which tongue has never yet described, will be set before me.' That is the point—*the miracle of earth reclad*. It is a miracle, indeed. I can understand the autumn. The law of gravitation demands that the sap shall flow downwards through the trunk, and the leaf flutter from the branch to the ground. But by what law does the sap rush up the trunk again, and the leaf reappear on the bough? And is it less a miracle because it is so frequent? Can it be argued that, if one man rises from the dead, it is a miracle; but that, if a million men rise from the dead, it is no miracle? Spring is not only miraculous; it is the multiplication of the miraculous. It is miracle by wholesale. And it is the miraculous in spring that secretly appeals to us. We are so accus-

tomed, ordinarily, to the apparent finality of death that we are filled with amazement as we behold the things that had drooped and died before our very eyes starting afresh to life and vigor and beauty.

Now, all this is a tacit recognition of the fact that I have stated. However much we may bemoan our lot, we are all of us secretly in love with life. Nobody has written with more precision on the subject of spring than has Richard Jeffries. He tells you the exact date on which you may expect to see the buds on the blackthorn; he knows to a nicety when to look for the first swallow skimming over the mill-dam; he can give the actual dates on which, year after year, the first butterfly has fluttered across his garden, the first cuckoo been heard up in the forest, the first nightingale down in the copse. But although he knows the season so perfectly it is easy to see that it is not, strictly speaking, the season itself that interests him. The great naturalist loves the spring, not so much for its own sake, as for the sake of the life that the spring so abundantly produces. It is 'the joy of life' that fascinates him. 'You may see it,' he says, 'in every motion; in the lissom bound of the hare; in the playful leap of the rabbit; in the song that the lark and the finch cannot help singing; in the soft cooing of the dove in the hawthorn; in the blackbird ruffling out her feathers on a rail. The sense of life—the consciousness of seeing and feeling—is manifestly intense in them all, and is in itself an exquisite pleasure.' Jeffries so revelled in the

vision of life, and so revolted from the horror of death, that his finger often refused to press the trigger. 'Many a time,' he assures us, 'I raised the gun, hesitated, dropped the barrel, and watched the beautiful bird. Indeed, it grew to be a habit. After carefully getting a wire over a jack; after waiting in a tree till a hare came along; after sitting in a mound till the partridges ran together to roost; in the end, the wire or gun remained unused. Time after time I have flushed partridges without firing, and have let the hare bound over the furrow free.' What does all this mean?

It clearly means that the ecstasy and intentness with which the naturalist watched the coming of the spring was simply an essential phase of his passionate love of life. In a greater or lesser degree, the same principle holds true of all of us. We love life; love it sincerely, deeply, constantly, devotedly; love it always and everywhere; sigh for it; long for it; hunger for it; thirst for it; and are only happy when we have it. President Woodrow Wilson referred to something of the kind in the course of an address which he delivered some time ago at the Hartford Seminary. He told a story of a poor illiterate woman whom he had met in one of the great American cities. The world had gone hardly with her and she had lost her hold on existence; it mattered little to her whether she lived or died. By some strange chance she became possessed of a paper-covered copy of one of Darwin's books. She was fascinated by the varie-

gated pageant of rich and wondrous life that it revealed to her. The volume seemed to throb with vitality, and her flagging pulses quickened as she turned the pages. 'I read that book,' she told Dr. Woodrow Wilson, 'and I saw that there was *something doing*; I saw that great movements are in progress in each of which I am playing my little part. It put fresh life into my veins. I felt it good to live. It made a new creature of me!' A similar discovery breaks upon us with every recurring springtime. We feel that there is *something doing*. Things are moving. The world is awake. In clapping our hands at the gilding of the wattle and the coming of the swallows, we are bearing witness to the love of living. We are giving three cheers for life itself.

In point of fact, it is only man's quenchless lust of life that enables him to live. In his *Kingdom of Man*, Sir Edwin Ray Lankester draws attention to the remarkable circumstance that although, as compared with the brutes, man is one of the most helpless and one of the least fertile creatures on the planet, he is at the same time one of the most doggedly persistent and one of the most phenomenally prolific. The ceaseless increase of man is, Sir Edwin declares, absolutely peculiar to him of all living species, animal or vegetable. 'His persistent multiplication is the more remarkable,' Professor Lankester goes on to say, 'since he is well known to be a slowly producing animal, perhaps the slowest of all, if you exclude a few extreme cases like the elephant. And the ex-

planation is that, whereas most animals have a much higher *birth-rate* than man, there is none with such a slow *death-rate*.' But, obviously, this is an explanation which itself requires explaining. *Why*, we ask, has man, in comparison with his brute companions, so low a death-rate? Professor Lankester says that there is but one answer. It is because of his intense and passionate love of life. 'Even when every natural chance is against him,' says Sir Edwin, 'he insists on saying, and on saying successfully, "*I will live!*"'

Moreover, in some way or other, he contrives to infect the beasts of prey, that might be regarded as his natural enemies, with his own profound respect for the sanctity of human life. Few things are more striking than the reluctance to attack a man which even the most savage monsters exhibit. Only when cornered or driven to desperation, or at their wits' ends for food, will they attempt to imbrue their fangs in human blood. The passage in which Livingstone comments on the unwillingness of lions to attack men has become classical; and Mr. Stuart White has a paragraph to the same effect. It has often been pointed out, too, that a horse will not trample upon a child if he can by any possibility step over him. Man is a fragile creature; he feels the heat and the cold; he is readily subject to hunger, thirst, and weariness; his delicate make-up is prone to a bewildering multiplicity of diseases; a very little thing will lay him low; almost any of the beasts could destroy him if

they would; yet his insistent love of life—the love of life of which the spring reminds us—is his salvation. When I treat a thing as sacred, my friends come to feel that, in some mysterious way, it is so. Man behaves towards life as though he loves it, and the universe, whilst failing to comprehend his sentiment, agrees to respect his strange feeling.

Just one step more and we shall come within sight of home. In the spring we feel that life is *one*. The life that pulses *within* us greets, in an ecstasy of kinship, the life that swarms *around* us. They act and re-act upon each other. The vision of life, multiplying itself in a thousand chaste and charming forms on every side, stimulates appreciably our own vitality. Life *within* is quickened by the spectacle of life *without*. Life responds to life as, under other conditions, love responds to love. Springtime helps to prove what Robert Louis Stevenson called the *Great Theorem of the Essential Liveableness of Life*. Stevenson, living his frail, precarious life from day to day, always felt that the return of spring gave him a new hold upon existence; and he delighted in compelling his sickly friends to drink of the same invigorating tonic. Fragile as was his own frame, did he not, on a memorable spring day, drive round for poor Henley, and, by violent hands, drag him out into the sunshine? 'I had a business,' he says, laughingly, 'to carry him down the long stair, and more of a business to get him up again, but while he was in the carriage it was splendid! It is now just the top

of spring with us. The whole country is mad with green. To see the cherry-blossom bitten out upon the black firs, and the black firs bitten out of the blue sky, was a sight to set before a king. You may imagine what it was to a man who has been eighteen months in a hospital ward. The look of his face was a wine to me.'

Now what does all this mean—this ministry of the life *without* to the life *within*? I find the tides of life ebbing within my own veins; I bring my enfeebled frame into contact with the abounding vitalities of springtime; and new vigor is poured straightway into every nerve and tissue! Is not that a revelation?

I like to think the Spring, before she started
Upon her lovely quest,
Knelt low at Christ's own footstool, and departed
With her sweet mission blest.

I like to think the Daffodilian splendor
That decks her tender grace
Was gathered when she knelt in glad surrender
Before His shining Face.

I like to think her gown, in fairest order,
With bud and bloom made bright,
Brushed something of its fragrance from the border
Of His pure robe of White.

My contemplation of the springtime revelries has taught me much and hinted even more. I have learned that my quenchless longing for life is, all unconsciously, a secret, unutterable yearning after God;

and how can you conceive of life apart from *Him*? The touch of spring has awakened new vitality in all my blood. When, therefore, I next find my soul sickening within me, I shall know what to do. I shall remember that the life *within* needs the stimulus of the life *without*. I shall bring my ebbing life into touch with Him who came into the world for no other purpose than that I should have life and have it more abundantly. And, as my body has often been revived by the magic of His springtime, I know that my spirit will pulsate with newness of life as she suns herself in the warmth and radiance of His presence.

III

WHEN KNIGHTS WERE BOLD

I

A PERFECT tornado swept this quiet study of mine this morning. Without a rap or a tap, the door suddenly flew open and three young people, flushed and breathless, stood excitedly before me.

'Oh, dad,' they cried, in co-operative fragments of incoherence, 'what do you think? The Mayor came to school this morning and made a speech, and he's invited us all to go to the pictures this afternoon; and we've got a half-holiday. You'll let us go, won't you?'

'The Mayor!' I replied, echoing the phrases by way of securing time in which to consider the matter, 'the Mayor! A half-holiday! The pictures! And what are they going to show you at the pictures, I wonder!'

'Oh, yes,' replied Frank with enthusiasm, 'I forgot to tell you. It's a piece called *When Knights Were Bold*. It's all about chivalry—King Arthur and the Round Table and all that sort of thing. You know, dad, we'll see brave knights and beautiful princesses and splendid horses and glorious tournaments and wonderful adventures, and lots and lots beside. You *will* let us go, won't you, dad?'

This eloquent speech, ably supported by equally effective demonstrations by his sisters, bore down all possibility of opposition; and so, while I sit scribbling here, these young madcaps of mine are invading fields of fine romance as the guests of His Worship less than half a mile away. Sitting there, following with sparkling eyes the gallant exploits of heroic knights, they, of course, have forgotten that they ever had a father; but my wayward mind insists upon following them and pondering their pleasure.

When Knights Were Bold! I do not like the title. For, side by side with the picturesque and romantic imagery which it summons to the mind, it makes a rash and sinister assumption. It assumes that the age of chivalry is past; it assumes that knights are bold no longer; and no man who loves his fellowmen will be prepared to endorse so uncharitable a verdict.

In one of the most finished and affecting songs of the troubadours, Girant de Bornelli chants the swan song of chivalry. He tells how the alluring song of a beautiful bird led him to forsake his usual path. He followed the delicious strains until they led him to a place where, beside a hedge, three maidens sang to each other of the glories of the golden age that had forever gone. Girant himself takes up the mournful theme, and proceeds to celebrate, for the entertainment of the bloodless generations yet to come, the valor, the daring and the

gallantry of the knights who had passed away. Seven hundred years have come and gone since Girant sang to his guitar this plaintive requiem of chivalry, and still the thing of which he sang adorns this dusty world of ours.

The earth is an erratic globe: you never know what will happen next; and yet, among its oddities, there are a few fixed principles on which you may stake your very life. And one of them is that all good things are deathless. When a foul thing creeps stealthily into the world, it comes only for a while, then languishes and dies. But when a fair thing folds its wings and settles here, it comes to go no more. And, beyond the shadow of a doubt, chivalry was a noble, a beautiful, and therefore an immortal thing. The mere accidents of its exterior—its pomp and pageantry, its glitter and display, its posings and affectations—have gone, as they were bound to go. There was nothing in them that could ensure their permanence. But the thing itself is not dead; is, indeed, incapable of death. It is one of the loveliest adornments of this life and one of the choicest attractions of the life to come.

II

Still, as the title of the film implies, the old chivalry is dead; and everybody knows why it died. It deserved to die. It became self-conscious and self-centred. We have in our libraries two priceless classics—one English and one Spanish—one in

poetry and one in prose—in which the collapse of the old chivalry is tellingly and pathetically portrayed. I refer, of course, to the *Idylls of the King* and to *Don Quixote*. In the *Idylls*, Tennyson makes King Arthur outline the vow by which the Knights of the Round Table were bound:

I made them lay their hands in mine and swear
To reverence the King as if he were
Their conscience, and their conscience as their King,
To break the heathen and uphold the Christ,
To ride abroad redressing human wrongs,
To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it,
To honor his own word as if his God's,
To lead sweet lives in purest chastity,
To love one maiden only, cleave to her,
And worship her by years of noble deeds

and so on. But the lovely scheme broke down. The most gallant knights proved recreant; the Court was whelmed in shame; Arthur was broken-hearted. And the secret of the disaster? Hallam has told us. In his *History of the Middle Ages*, he has a fine analysis of the history and decline of chivalry. He shows that while, in the ideal, the knight fared forth to his adventure for the sake of the exalted ends that would be compassed by his gallant enterprise, he soon forgot the ends and learned to court adventure for its own sake. 'The knights errant of romance,' Hallam says, 'performed their best exploits from the love of renown rather than from any solicitude to promote the happiness of mankind.' It was the form of chivalry without the spirit of

chivalry, and, as such it was, of course, bound to perish.

Cervantes has narrated the same story in another way. At every street-corner he saw groups of young Spaniards listening open-eyed to the tales that were being told by the men who had returned from the wars. He saw that these martial recitals were inflaming the imagination of the youth of Castile to a degree that was positively dangerous. Hot-headed young enthusiasts were swept off their feet by a desire to cover themselves with glory. They were prepared to hazard their lives in search of adventure even though no practical gain resulted from their splendid exploits. They would ride forth and fight something, whether that something needed to be fought or not.

It was to counteract this curious and extravagant temper, partly admirable and partly ludicrous, that Cervantes wrote the book that made his name immortal. He glorified the spirit of sacrifice and paid eloquent homage to the genius of chivalry, while at the same time ridiculing the devotion of these lofty impulses to ignoble ends. He wrote *Don Quixote* to show that, while there is nothing nobler than a man's willingness to lay down his life in a glorious cause, there is no knightliness in jeopardizing one's life in tilting at wind-mills. Cervantes is always careful to magnify and extol the really heroic; but he firmly insists that the genuine knight will hold truly the balance between romance and

reality. The risk run must bear some due proportion to the end sought. Don Quixote's courage is beyond all praise; but he squanders it upon mean ends. His valor is the valor of a mind incapable of seeing things as they are. To him, a flock of common sheep is a phalanx of hostile knights; a barber's bowl is Mambrino's golden helmet; a wayside windmill is an insolent giant. The work-a-day world is wrapped in a shimmering haze; he sees nothing clearly. All this reflects, as in a mirror, the gorgeous chimeras and splendid illusions which dazzled the eyes of the youth of Spain three or four centuries ago. Cervantes saw the danger, and, like a true knight-errant, he made a gallant effort to avert it. By means of his book he administered a tonic which, he hoped, would recall his countrymen to common sense. It was a brave attempt to save the knight of the sixteenth century from exposing himself to the derision of his fellows and the contempt of posterity.

III

The attempt failed. But, though it failed, we must not imagine that chivalry is dead. The fact is that, of all the heroic virtues, chivalry most readily adapts itself to the temper of each successive period. Whatever style the spirit of the age may affect, the genius of the knight unflinchingly bends it to his courtly purpose. Chivalry wears the garb, and speaks the dialect, of each generation and of each locality with-

out in the slightest degree compromising its own inherent dignity and charm. There may have been chivalry in the knight who, armed cap-à-pie, rode proudly into the tourney to win a fair lady's smile; but there is just as much chivalry in every twentieth century schoolboy whose highest aspiration is to be 'a sport,' and who is determined, come what may, to play the game.

There's a breathless hush in the close to-night—
 Ten to make and the match to win—
 A bumping pitch and a blinding light,
 An hour to play, and the last man in.
 And it's not for the sake of a ribboned coat,
 Or the selfish hope of a season's fame,
 - But his captain's hand on his shoulder smote—
 "Play up! Play up, and play the game!"

This is the word that, year by year,
 While in her place the school is set,
 Every one of her sons must hear,
 And none who hears it dare forget.
 This they all, with a joyful mind,
 Bear through life like a torch in flame,
 And, falling, fling to the host behind—
 "Play up! Play up, and play the game!"

There may have been chivalry in the brave days of old; there is no less chivalry in the public life of our own day. In his biography of his father, Lord Randolph Churchill, Mr. Winston Churchill has a magnificent passage in which he does homage to the high and disinterested air which characterized the statesman of the period with which he deals. Sir Michael Hicks Beach refused the leadership of

the House of Commons, and insisted upon serving under a younger man. Sir Stafford Northcote, in the interests of party union, voluntarily effaced himself in a peerage. Lord Salisbury twice offered to be a member of a Hartington Administration, and Lord Hartington twice refused to be Prime Minister. Sir Henry James refused the Woolsack; Mr. Chamberlain laid aside his great power and office; while Lord Randolph Churchill cheerfully relinquished, in the heyday of his career, the Chancellorship of the Exchequer and the leadership of the Commons. Such considerable renunciations indicate, as Mr. Churchill affirms, a healthy and generous condition of public life, in which a certain stately and unselfish chivalry plays no inconspicuous part. It is very pleasant to be reminded in this way that, in parliamentary life, as in so many other fields, the knight is still to be found. His heart is just as high, and his spirit as fine, as when, attired in shining armor, he cut a more picturesque figure and graced a totally different environment.

The knight-errant of romance loved to appear in courts; the knight-errant of to-day is to be found in counting-houses. One of the merchant princes of America has recently visited London and has communicated his impressions to the *Wall Street Journal*. Nothing struck him more than the simple straightforwardness and trustfulness of London financiers. He describes the way in which a large stock issue is handled.

'Here in London,' he says, 'half a dozen private bankers meet together in a room and make their agreement by word of mouth, each one stating the amount he will underwrite. One of them may make a pencil note, but there is no contract of any kind drawn up. It would do the Englishman an injustice, however, to say that his word is merely as good as his bond. It is for such purposes a great deal better than any bond could be, because, while a lawyer could quibble about a bond, the English banker does not quibble about his word. Not one of the parties to this verbal understanding ever dreams of repudiating his pledge.

'Americans would hardly credit the volume of British business which is done by the merest word of mouth, without written evidence of the transaction. Other countries know this. The Brazilians, for example, have two phrases expressive of integrity. Both are current wherever the Portuguese tongue is spoken. One is 'the word of an Englishman,' meaning a promise that must be kept with scrupulous honor, and the other is 'English time,' meaning an engagement that must be kept to the minute.

'This,' our American concludes, 'is unequivocal and striking testimony to British dealing, and it will be corroborated whenever the Englishman does business. For generations and centuries the world has been imbibing the impression that whether at home or abroad, the Briton plays fair and keeps his

word, and this is a reputation which is worth more than gold.'

Clearly, therefore, the world is permeated and dominated by chivalry. The knights are jostling each other everywhere. And no wonder! For the church has come to recognize that her supreme business is to bring to perfection those radiant qualities to which King Arthur pledged his knights in vain. In one of Isaiah's most seraphic flights, he caught a vision of the kingdom that is coming. He saw the *sovereign*, and he saw the *subject*; and in two verses, unequalled for majesty and insight, he describes them both. The Sovereign? '*Behold,*' he says, '*a King shall reign in righteousness!*' And the Subject? '*A man,*' he goes on to say, '*shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, as a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.*' The world has never been given a finer definition of knighthood. The old chivalry was emotional, dreamy, unpractical; and it came to nothing. But the newer chivalry, the chivalry which the prophet foresaw, is human, practical, beneficent. Arthur and his knights moved from an atmosphere of extravagant glamour into an atmosphere of sordid gloom. But the splendid sovereign and the chivalrous citizen of Isaiah's radiant dream shall move from gloom to gladness and from gladness on to glory. It is no poet's fancy. The new knight is a fact. Sir John Seeley proves it in *Ecce Homo*;

George MacDonald demonstrates it in *David Elginbrod*; we have all discovered it at some time or other.

The knight of the new chivalry—the knight who follows the King—is a gentleman to his finger-tips. His is that chastity of honor which feels a stain like a wound. No knight of ancient tournament can surpass him in his reverence for womankind, or in his contempt of cowardice. I have entered his presence when the gloom has been too much for me, and the dauntless strength of his spirit has proved a hiding-place from the wind; I have gone to him when the burning glare has been too fierce, and the calm of his brave soul has been like the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. The church exists for no other purpose than to sprinkle the world with knights of this heroic order.

IV

NED LAVENDER

ONE of the advantages that a minister derives from a long sojourn in one place is the gratification of his legitimate curiosity. Mysteries that, had he folded his tent at the end of three or five or even seven years, would have remained mysteries, yield up their secrets in the course of a more prolonged stay.

I am led to these reflections through having found, in turning out an old drawer, a photo of Ned Lavender. A great fellow was Ned. When I settled at —, his was one of the first personalities to attract my attention. He seemed to spend his whole life in an atmosphere of merriment. Whenever you saw Ned, everybody in his company was laughing. He was a born comedian; the funny side of things appealed to him automatically and irresistibly; witticisms dropped from his lips as the natural overflow of a gay and exuberant spirit. Those who only saw him under such conditions, and were therefore driven to superficial judgment, may have summed him up as a clown, lacking seriousness and gravity. Happily, I was under no misapprehensions in that regard. For, to me at any rate, he quickly revealed the other side of his character. I had only

been a few weeks in the place when he called to see me.

'In work like yours,' he observed, 'there must be a lot of things that require attention of a purely mechanical kind—formal letters that need to be written; manuscript that needs to be copied; accounts that need to be paid or purchases to be made; appointments to be arranged by telephone; and all that sort of thing. It's work that you wouldn't care to ask anybody to do for you; but I have stacks of time on my hands; and I shall be delighted to be entrusted with such commissions. If you want someone to run for six-penn'orth of stamps,' he added laughingly, but none the less in earnest, 'don't hesitate to send for me!'

He was as good as his word; he cheerfully undertook scores of menial tasks, setting me free to concentrate on matters of graver moment. Two things, however, puzzled me.

The *first* was that a man of such education, attainments, and capacity, by no means old and by no means rich, should be at liberty to devote his time and talents to duties that seemed out of all proportion to the measure of his powers.

The *second* was that he was not a member of the church. He was present at every service, Sundays and week-days. He was tremendously in earnest about the success of the church's work. After an evangelistic address, or a sermon that had particularly appealed to him, he would press my hand with

eloquent fervor, while the moisture in his eyes would witness to the intensity of his emotion. Yet, when I examined the church register, I discovered with astonishment that Ned's name was not there. Nor would he undertake any task of a definitely religious character that would bring him into prominence or publicity. Outside the church, he was known as a singularly witty and gifted speaker. At concerts, and at entertainments for philanthropic purposes, I have heard him move a vote of thanks, or acknowledge one, in a speech of rare felicity and charm. Yet nothing on earth would induce him to attempt such a task in connection with the church; and when, on our way into the prayer-meeting one evening, I asked him if I might call upon him to lead us briefly to the throne of grace, his face blanched, his lip quivered, he insisted on my promising never again to make such a request; and then, turning sadly away, he walked home without attending the meeting for which he had come!

A few weeks later, in the course of a desultory and confidential chat with Evan Silverton, the church secretary, I guardedly hinted that Ned's personality and behavior were a constant bewilderment to me. 'He's one of the most devoted and useful men among us,' I added; 'I don't know how I should manage without him; yet, as far as I can see, he is not even a member of the church!'

'Poor old Ned!' sighed Evan, after a lengthy pause. 'The fact is—and I don't suppose he'd mind

our telling you; indeed, I expect he takes it for granted that we've told you long ago—the fact is, he made one serious mistake, and he'll never get over it. He was cashier at McAlister & Waddell's; he evidently lost his head in a moment of financial pressure; in view of his long and excellent record, the firm refused to prosecute; but, of course, he forfeited his position and has never been the same man since. He has a genius for buying and selling land; and a few old business friends, rallying to his help, made it possible for him to earn a modest living in that way. It's about three years since he surprised us one morning by attending the church. Mr. Dugald McIntyre, the Scottish evangelist, was preaching, and took for his subject the story of Jeremiah's visit to the potter's house—the vessel that, marred in the making, was made by the potter all over again. It seemed to have a wonderful effect on poor old Ned. He's attended the services regularly ever since, and seems to derive infinite comfort from them. But he would never join the church. Just once we invited him to do so; but he shook his head so sadly and seemed so pained by the suggestion, that the invitation was never repeated. I don't know if I'm acting wisely in telling you all this: but, as you have so much to do with him, it seems right that you should know; and I really think that he himself would wish it.'

During the next few years, Ned and I were constantly together. We met in all sorts of society

and under all sorts of conditions. Sometimes he was keeping the company in roars of boisterous laughter by his endless succession of quips, antics, and drolleries: sometimes he was discussing, with an interest and delight that, in him, were a kind of ecstasy, some passage of Scripture that had captivated his heart in his private devotions, or some phase of a subject with which he had heard me dealing. In any other man, the two phases of life might have seemed incongruous. In *him*, the love of the ludicrous and the love of the serious were perfectly harmonious. His happiness and his holiness seemed the natural counterparts of each other. He passed from the ridiculous to the sublime, and from the sublime to the ridiculous, with the easy grace of a child who is perfectly at home in all the rooms of his father's house.

He died very suddenly, and died at sea. The ship was so near port, however, that it was decided to embalm the body and bring it back for burial. The concourse at the graveside was an extraordinary testimony to the affection and confidence that, in spite of everything, Ned had inspired. Members of Parliament, aldermen and civic officials, professional men, magnates of the commercial world, as well as representatives of churches, charitable institutions and philanthropic organizations, were all present to deplore a loss that was felt to be a real and poignant one. The floral tributes were astonishingly numerous and exquisitely beautiful. But one

of the most striking was a glorious anchor of carnations. And, attached to the silk ribbons, was a small card bearing the inscription: FROM THE ONLY MAN LIVING WHO KNOWS THE WHOLE STORY. The relatives assured me that they had not the faintest idea as to the identity of the sender. It was delivered by a local florist; and, as far as I know, no attempt was made to violate the sender's evident desire for anonymity.

There, as I supposed, the matter ended. I never expected to hear more, either of the tragedy or of the triumph of Ned Lavender's career. I cherished his memory as the memory of a good man, a stanch friend, and an invaluable helper, who had been doomed, through one terrible misdeed for which he could never forgive himself, to spend his life under a heavy cloud. That, I fancied, was the whole story.

But, some years afterward, I was disillusioned. It was a hot summer's night. Lounging in deck chairs on the lawn and the veranda, we were all enjoying ice-creams and the evening paper when we were suddenly startled by the click of the gate. A tall lady of snow-white hair and stately carriage, neatly attired in a dark gray costume, stepped hesitantly up the path, and, as soon as I met her, apologized for disturbing us. Her accents subtly suggested great strength of character mingled with infinite gentleness and refinement. It was evidently a real grief to her to break up our restful party.

I escorted her to the front room, switched on the lights, and lowered the blinds.

‘You must forgive me for coming at this hour,’ she began, ‘but my husband is very ill. Indeed, Dr. Waters holds out no hope at all. During the last week or so Tom has several times mentioned your name; and it occurred to me that it might do him a world of good if you could find time to call. We have never attended your church; indeed, my husband, though a good, earnest Christian man, has never gone to any church at all. I myself am a member of the Society of Friends; but he would never come with me to the meeting, and, when I offered to accompany him to your church, or to any other, he always declined—a little sadly, I thought. I have sometimes fancied—and the fancy has grown stronger of late—that, although our married life has been a wonderfully happy one, he has kept some secret from me. If it is so, I am sure that he has done it for my sake. But it seems to me that the secret—if secret there be—grows heavier with the years. I cannot help associating it with the pain that I evidently cause him when I suggest our going to church together. And—once more it may be fancy—I have thought a great deal of the secret—if secret there be—when I have heard him talk of you and of your influence on some of his friends. You must excuse all this: it must sound very silly: but women have intuitions, you know, that they can never satisfactorily explain: and I

should be so very grateful if you could call and see Tom during the next few days.'

I called, of course, next day. It was a charming home, the lawns and flower-beds in perfect order and everything about the place showing signs of taste, daintiness, and care. My friend of the previous evening met me at the front door, showed me into a most charming drawing-room, adorned by handsome engravings and delicate little statuettes, and then went off to a bedroom near by to prepare her husband for my coming.

'This is really very good of you,' he exclaimed, as he stretched forth a hand to welcome me. Like his wife, he was of fine features and gray hair; but his face was drawn by sickness and, perhaps, by trouble. 'My wife told me this morning,' he went on, 'that she had mentioned my illness to you, although I cannot imagine what possessed her to do so. Still, I'm glad she did: the wonder is that, with all your own people to look after, you can spare time for a rank outsider like myself.'

He was one of those men with whom it is extremely difficult to get to close grips. Quiet, courteous, reserved; he gave me no opening at all. I resolved that it would never do to force matters. I therefore brought the interview to an early and natural close, and promised, at his own invitation, to return in a day or two.

I did so; and, on this occasion, found the situation completely changed. For one thing, he was

very much worse; and, for another, he had evidently made up his mind to adopt a more confidential attitude.

'I first heard of you,' he said, 'from old Ned Lavender. He and I were great chums at one time; and, during the last few years of his life, he never met me on the street without stopping to tell me of something that you had said or done. He was a great soul, was Ned,' the sick man added feelingly; and then, to my utter astonishment, he stopped abruptly, turned his face to the wall, and I realized that he was sobbing like a child.

'You must forgive me,' he continued, facing me once more. 'It breaks my very heart to talk of Ned Lavender. But I have made up my mind to tell you my secret.' He composed himself in the bed with the air of one who confronts a piece of serious business.

'You buried Ned,' he went on, 'and I stood not far from you in the crowd at the graveside. You may possibly remember that, among the floral tributes, there was an anchor of carnations sent anonymously FROM THE ONLY MAN LIVING WHO KNOWS THE WHOLE STORY. *I sent those flowers.* And, before I die, I feel that I must unburden my mind of the story.' He pointed to a glass of water on the table beside his bed; and I helped him moisten his lips.

'Well,' he resumed, 'we both worked in the old days for McAlister & Waddell. We were thrown

a good deal together and became fast chums. As a natural consequence, we moved in pretty much the same society and met each other of an evening at the homes of mutual friends. And, to make a long story short, we managed to fall in love with the same girl! I remember the night when, with all the innocence in life, he began to rave to me about Hope Gladwyn. He had completely lost his head over her. Yet, in a sly and covert sort of way, I had been courting Hope for months. And she, with that perfect frankness which is half her charm, had made no secret of her feelings. She had encouraged me. The truth was soon apparent to both Ned and myself. She loved me, and had not given him a serious thought. When Ned first realized the truth, it was like a dagger in his heart. He scarcely spoke for days: his face was ashen and drawn. I half expected him to drop my friendship; and he was evidently struggling with a temptation to do so; but, happily for me, he overcame the impulse and we remained good friends in spite of everything.

‘Then came the tragedy. I got into serious financial troubles; in a distracted moment I borrowed money from the office; and, before I could return it, the defalcation was discovered. Several of us, including Ned and me, were suspended. And, while I was hourly expecting to be placed under arrest, I received a message from the office saying that I was to return at once; the culprit had confessed!

'It was Ned who had made the confession; and it turned out that, before leaving the office, he had deliberately shuffled the papers in such a way as to give verisimilitude to the story of his guilt.

'I was astounded, bewildered, dumbfounded! I could scarcely believe the evidence of my senses. I mooned about, perfectly stupefied, for hours; and then, late at night, unable to think about sleep, I went down to Ned's place.

"'Yes," he said, "I took the blame; and, in a sense, I deserved it; for if I'd kept as tight a hold as I should have done on your cash and your accounts, it couldn't have happened. It's better as it is. I knew that, if you were found out, you would have been arrested, tried, and imprisoned. And what of Hope then? It would have killed her. It was for her sake that I did it, not for yours. I would gladly have lived for her or died for her. But it was not to be. So I will do this for her.'" The patient paused in his recital, and I again touched his lips with the water.

'I think,' he went on after a while, 'I think Ned made one serious mistake. He meant it well; but he made me promise never to tell Hope. I've kept my word, although, God knows, it would have been a thousand times easier to have broken it. I fully made up my mind that, as soon as Ned returned from his trip—the trip from which he never returned—I would seek release from my pledge. For years the horrid thing has been gnawing like a worm

at my vitals. After I'm gone you can tell her—I fancy she half suspects already—indeed, you can tell anybody you like. It's a comfort to me in dying to know that the truth will so soon be out. Ned would not have objected to that. Somehow, I should dread to meet him in the other world unless I had done this much to put things straight.'

By this time he was thoroughly exhausted, but a look of infinite relief had crept into his tired eyes. I read a few verses, commended him to the love that never fails, and then, his eyes being closed, tip-toed my way from the room.

A week later I read the burial service beside his grave. And, immediately after pronouncing the benediction, I stepped across to a green mound, less than a hundred yards away, and, having paused a moment with bared head, laid a few flowers on my dead friend's grave in his dead friend's name.

V

THE LEOPARD'S SKIN

I

It is a brilliant Oriental court. On his sumptuous throne, overhung by a glittering canopy of purple and gold, sits the king. He is surrounded by a throng of obsequious courtiers clothed in the flowing and many-colored draperies peculiar to the East. Moving on tiptoe hither and thither are a score of Ethiopian slaves—men of black skin and thick lips and woolly hair—the bearers of burdens and runners of errands. And scattered about the floor of the court are the tawny skins of many leopards—trophies that are reminiscent of many an adventurous and exciting expedition in the wilds. They are so arranged around the throne that they appear to be angrily guarding it. The fierce faces of the leopards, with eyes glaring, jaws wide open and tusks gleaming, stare menacingly at every suppliant who ventures to approach the royal dais. And here, standing immediately before the king, is the tall and sinewy form of a prophet! His severely simple garments contrast strangely with the vivid colors grouped about him; his face is sunburned and weather-beaten; his eyes burn with intensity and passion. King and courtiers hang upon his eloquent

lips as, out of a full heart, he delivers his message. Then, all at once, he throws out his hand, and with finger extended, points to one of the ebony slaves moving, silent as a shadow, about the background of the court. '*Can the Ethiopian change his skin?*' he cries. Again he points to the skins of the leopards spread out on the tessellated mosaic of the floor. '*Or can the leopard change his spots?*' he demands. And when the prophet's voice is silent, and his auditors—some singly and some in little groups—go their several ways, it is that striking question that follows them into their seclusion: *Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots?* It is a difficult question to answer. It is not unanswerable, but there are so many possible replies it takes some discernment to recognize the right one.

II

Suppose we go for a walk, and, on our way, call on a number of representative people and submit to each of them the prophet's question! In one of his operas, Sir W. S. Gilbert avers that

Every little boy and girl
That's born into this world alive,
Is either a little Liberal
Or else a little Conservative.

That being so, we shall ascertain the sum total of the world's opinion fairly accurately if we submit the question, first to a typical Conservative, and then to a typical Liberal. Let us try.

And it so happens that, just up the hill yonder, there lives a very estimable friend of mine, a stanch Conservative.

‘How very absurd!’ he exclaims, as soon as we have propounded the question. ‘The Ethiopian change his skin! The leopard change his spots! Ridiculous, my dear sir, perfectly ridiculous! Why should the Ethiopian wish to change his skin? Isn’t a black skin as good as a white skin? Isn’t a black skin as healthy as a white skin, and as clean? Why on earth should an Ethiopian want to change his skin? And, by the same token, why should a leopard wish to change his spots? A leopard’s spots are beauty-spots! No creature in the wild has a more handsome coat than the leopard. And the best of it is that its *utility* is as marked as its *beauty*. The leopard, I suppose, would like to exchange his spots for the tiger’s stripes. But nature has designed the *stripes* of the tiger to suit the *habits* of the tiger, and the *spots* of the leopard to suit the *ways* of the leopard. The tiger prowls along the ground among reeds and saplings: in the dusk his stripes look for all the world like the tall and slender stems amid which he stalks, and he is scarcely distinguishable from them. The leopard, on the other hand, is made to climb trees. He lies full length along the bough waiting for the unsuspecting gazelle to browse upon the soft grass beneath him. His coat is so like the color of the bark that his presence on the branch can scarcely be detected, while his black and irreg-

ular spots are exactly like the shadows of the leaves. If the tiger had the leopard's spots they would act as danger-signals and his victims would never come near him: if the leopard had the tiger's stripes the gazelle would see them from afar and fly in terror. The tiger's stripes are perfectly suited to the tiger; the leopard's spots are the very thing for the leopard; why on earth should either wish to change them?'

My Conservative friend goes on to say that the desire of the Ethiopian to change his skin, and the desire of the leopard to change his spots, represent one of the most disquieting elements in human life.

'We seek a change,' he says, 'not because a change is *good*, but simply because it *is* a change, we are restless, fidgetty, neurasthenic. Without rime or reason we change our location or change our vocation. We lack stability and constancy and persistence. Our very religion is tainted by our fickleness. Ministers are too fond of seeking fresh congregations, and congregations are too quick to hanker after a new minister. The Ethiopian's skin may be the best skin possible: it makes no difference: he wants to change it. The leopard's spots may be exquisitely suited to his requirements: he casts envious eyes on the tiger's stripes. It's the way of the world, and, mark my words, it's a bad way!'

The clock strikes ten. At ten o'clock every morning—summer and winter, rain or fine—my Conservative friend goes down town to arrange any little matters of business that require his attention. He

never departs from his custom for anything or anybody. We therefore rise, thank him for the light that he has thrown on our perplexity, and take our leave.

III

Now it so happens, that just up the hill and over the hill, hidden from sight by the crest of the hill, there lives another estimable friend of mine, an out-and-out Liberal.

‘Ah, that’s fine, very fine!’ he exclaims, enthusiastically, as soon as I have stated my problem. ‘That’s how the world gets on, you know! It’s because the Ethiopian is never satisfied with his skin, and the leopard never satisfied with his spots, that we go ahead and make progress and leave the ashes of our dead selves behind us. Conplacency, as Lord Rosebery said, is a fatal gift, and the nation that is satisfied is lost! Remember that, and it will make you think a little more charitably of your dissatisfied Ethiopian and your discontented leopard. Depend upon it, it is that noble dissatisfaction with existing conditions that has led the race from its primeval barbarism to its present culture.’

Strange how one thing suggests another! As I close my friend’s gate behind me, I suddenly remember a passage in Huxley which, a week or ten days ago, greatly interested me. It is the chapter in which Huxley describes the habits of the English crayfish. The body of the young crayfish grows, our learned scientist tells us, but its shell remains

stationary. The consequence is that the pressure soon becomes intolerable. When the crayfish can endure the torture no longer, it throws itself upon its back, expands every muscle and tissue to the utmost extent, and, with a mighty struggle, bursts its shell. A new shell quickly forms, to be cast off in the same way at a later period. But each change represents growth, progress, advance! And it is by just such changes, as my Liberal friend stated so emphatically, that humanity forges its way toward its ultimate goal.

We rest on the brow of the hill for a few moments to reflect on all that my two friends have said. And, sitting there, it occurs to us that, although each has given utterance to a certain modicum of wisdom, there is an element of superficiality about the conclusions of both of them. We wish that we could probe the matter a little more deeply. And, with the wish, a new idea occurs to us.

IV

I suddenly remember that, just up the hill, and over the hill, and down on the other side of the hill, there lives an old Philosopher who spends most of his time in cogitating the more profound and elusive problems of human existence. To him we accordingly hasten.

'Very sad!' he murmurs, as soon as we have told him of our reasons for disturbing him. 'Very sad and very pathetic!'

Surprised at his taking the matter so much to heart, we beg for an amplification of his views.

‘Well,’ he replied, ‘it strikes me as being infinitely pathetic that the Ethiopian only wants to change his *skin*, and the leopard his *spots*. Each of them is concerned, you observe, only about *the look of the thing*. The barbarian wants to get rid, not of his barbarism, but of his blackness; the savage wants to change, not his savagery, but his skin; the leopard is worried, not about his cruelty, but about his coat. Neither the Ethiopian nor the leopard wants to *be* better; they merely want to *look* better. Do you not feel with me that there is pathos there?’

We agree that there is a good deal of justice in the Philosopher’s complaint. He is probing, as I felt sure he would, beneath the surface of things. His words remind us of Addison’s *Mountain of Miseries*. Addison tells how, as he was pondering the miseries and misfortunes of mankind, he fell asleep. He dreamed that a proclamation was issued commanding every mortal to bring his griefs and calamities and throw them together in a heap. A vast plain was appointed for the purpose. ‘I took my stand,’ he says, ‘in the center of it, and saw, with a great deal of pleasure, the whole human species marching one after another, and throwing down their several loads, which immediately grew up into a prodigious mountain that seemed to rise above the clouds.’ He then describes this immense procession in some detail, and adds:

'But what most of all surprised me was that there was not a single vice or folly thrown into the whole heap: at which I was very much astonished, having concluded within myself that every one would take this opportunity of getting rid of his passions, prejudices, and failures. I took particular notice of a very profligate fellow who, I did not question, came laden with his crimes. But, upon searching into his bundle, I found that, instead of throwing his *guilt* from him, he had only laid down his *memory*!'

It is Addison's way of emphasizing the element in human life that seems to our old philosopher at the foot of the hill so intensely pathetic. Men are willing to keep their evil *characters* if they can but get rid of their evil *reputations*. They are scrupulously studious of appearances. The Ethiopian is concerned about his *skin* and the leopard about his *spots*; that is all.

V

But we must pay one more call. For just up the hill, and over the hill, and along the road at the foot of the hill, there lives an old Evangelist. He is a gracious and kindly spirit, of long service and ripe experience. To him, therefore, we propound our problem.

'Change his skin!' the old man echoes, 'change his skin! Why, man, he can change, not only his *skin*, but his very *soul*. It is the glory of the gospel that it transforms a man through and through! It

makes another man of him. He is born again; born, not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible. Men who are as fierce and as cruel as leopards may not only change their leopardly spots; they may be made as gentle as lambs. Why, it does a man's heart good to witness the transformations that the grace of Christ can effect. If you have any doubt about its power to make black men white and fierce men gentle, go home and read books like *Down in Water Street*, or *Broken Earthenware*, or, for that matter, the *Acts of the Apostles*. And you will soon be convinced that He is able to save to the uttermost those who come unto God by Him.'

We become infected by the old man's sublime confidence and triumphant faith. He has left nothing more to be said. We thank him and take our leave.

And, as we wend our way homeward, we think of the bewilderment into which the prophet's strange question threw those Oriental courtiers many centuries ago. '*Can the Ethiopian change his skin?*' he cried, pointing to the slaves around the throne, '*or can the leopard change his spots?*' he added, pointing to the skins upon the floor. The question was asked six hundred years before Christ was born at Bethlehem. On *that* side of the cross the problem seemed incapable of solution: on *this* side of the cross it is simplicity itself. For on this side of the cross whosoever will may be made a new creature in Christ Jesus.

VI

THE CHARIOTS OF GOD

I TOOK my favorite walk along the sea-front from Shipwreck Point to Beechington Bay yesterday, just to see what it looked like after such terrific gales. It was not an exhilarating stroll. The wattles that, a week ago, were a riot of gold, were blackened as though by fire, and their broken branches were swaying sorrowfully. Among the rocks I found quite a number of birds that had perished in the storm. I saw at least a dozen white-faced petrels that had been blown in from the sea and cruelly dashed against the trees and cliffs. And, on the sands, I found two little scarlet-breasted robins. They had been buffeted by the winds, blown into the water, and cast up by the waves. As I neared Beechington I found a sheltered seat and sat for awhile in the genial sunshine, resting after my walk. Perhaps I dozed.

I

For I thought that there was a stir of many feet, and a murmur of many voices, in the Valley of Armageddon. The Wind was on his trial, and in all that vast concourse of spectators, he seemed to have no friends to show him sympathy. After the

fashion of notorious prisoners, he was known by many names. Some called him the Storm, others the Tempest, while still others referred to him as the Hurricane, the Sirocco, the Tornado, the Gale, the Blizzard, the Simoon; there appeared to be no end to the names which, under different conditions, he assumed. But, by whatever name they called him, they all agreed that he was a merciless tyrant, a ruthless vandal, loving to overthrow and destroy. He was charged, before the Great Lords of Armageddon, with lawlessness, with rebellion, with anarchy, with obdurate refusal to recognize any authority but the authority of his own caprice. He wielded, it was generally admitted, enormous power; but it was a power ungoverned by principle and untouched by pity. Among the myriad witnesses, all the Four Elements stood up to bear testimony against him.

‘He uproots my tallest trees and scatters the petals of my fairest flowers!’ cried the Spirit of the Earth, as, clad in garments of green, she rose to give her evidence. ‘One day he sweeps across the desert, scorching and suffocating any travelers he may happen to find there, and then, when he emerges from those burning sands, and comes upon some more temperate zone, his breath is like the blast of a furnace, and everything wilts and shrivels before him. The next day he comes blustering up from the frozen realms of everlasting snow, and men are bitten by the teeth of the blizzard. He laughs in his cruel glee, as, with boisterous mirth, he flings

to earth the toddling child; and he screams with fiendish delight as he hurls the cripple with his crutches to the ground, and pushes the aged and infirm down a steep flight of steps or into a muddy gutter.'

And there was a note of passion in the voice of the Spirit of the Earth as she said it.

The next witness was draped in garments that were white as snow. 'I have not a moment's peace!' cried the Spirit of the Air, bitterly. 'All the world over, I am kept in a state of constant agitation. I really am not mistress in my own house! As soon as I settle down for a brief repose, it proves to be but the calm before the storm, and all my tranquillity is changed to tumult. Oh, it is terrible, terrible, terrible!' And the Spirit of the Air almost sobbed as she spoke.

'And as for me,' exclaimed the Spirit of Fire, as, robed all in red, she entered the witness-box; 'as for me, he actually turns all my virtues into vices, my good into evil. If I light a young child's candle, he blows it out and leaves the little one to perish in the darkness. If I light the fire at which some weary wayfarer may warm his hands and broil his food, the prisoner blows upon it and sends the flames roaring through the forest, burning down stacks and stables and happy homesteads, and spreading ruin and devastation everywhere! My life is a terror to me. I am afraid to start a single genial flame for fear that he will make it the instrument by which

he will burn up a prairie or turn a prosperous city into a heap of smouldering ashes.' And the red-robed witness gave place to one all clad in garments of blue.

'I have suffered most of all,' said the Spirit of the Waters. 'He lashes my waves into fury, and destroys those who confide themselves to my care. Every shore is littered with the wreckage of brave ships, while the ocean-bed is covered with the hulls of fine vessels and the bones of dauntless men. It matters not to him whether the ships are good ships or bad ships. Pirates or pioneers, missionaries or buccaneers, he makes no distinction; he sweeps across my wide, wide waters and hurls them to their doom. I have heard the last pitiful, despairing shriek of millions as they threw up their hands and vanished; and their cries are in my ears and in my heart night and day. And they are all *his* victims!' she murmured, fiercely, as she bowed to the Lords of Armageddon.

The principal witnesses—the Four Elements—had been heard; the Court adjourned; and the vast multitude that thronged the Valley of Armageddon melted rapidly away. I was not present when the trial was resumed, but I was astonished to hear, when it was over, that the prisoner was not only acquitted, but thanked for the services that he had rendered to mankind. I could scarcely believe my ears, and straightaway resolved to investigate the matter for myself.

II

I called witnesses innumerable. It would be tedious to set down all that they said to me. But they soon convinced me that the Four Elements had too hastily concluded that the Wind is moved only by caprice. A very learned scientist explained to me the laws that govern the rising of the winds. I do not pretend to understand all that he said. He showed me how the heat of the tropics and the rigors of the North and South are alike tempered by the kindly ministry of the Wind; and he satisfied me that our so-called temperate climates are only temperate because of the same beneficent influence. 'The earth,' he said, 'is not unlike ourselves; it lives, just as we do, by breathing; and the storm is the breath of its nostrils.'

An eminent physician tried to make me understand the cleansing ministry of the winds.

'Cleansing!' I retorted; 'why, I thought the winds stirred up all the dust and hurled the microbes in our faces.'

'The broom does pretty much the same,' he replied, with professional placidity, 'but on the whole you would classify the broom as an implement that makes for cleanliness. The winds are to the planet what the broom is to the parlor.'

A great naturalist also came to my aid. 'It is all very well,' he said, 'for you to rail against the storm. You say that it lashes the sea into a fury and wrecks

your gallant ships. But the storm is not concerned about your ships. Your ships are artificial contrivances that you entrust to the waves at your own risk. The storm is thinking, not about ships, but about fish. The stormy seasons round your rocky coast are the happiest times of the year for many of the creatures that live in the salt sea water. The violence of the gale renders them secure from their enemies, and the thunder of the breakers on the reef is the grandest music that they ever hear.'

Many such witnesses presented themselves. And then the inquiry entered upon a fresh phase. My attention was called to Carlyle's story of old David Hope. David Hope was a farmer by the Solway. It was a bleak, barren country; and in wet seasons it was almost impossible to garner the crop. This particular season had been wet; but now a few bright days had come, and it looked as though some of the corn might be saved after all. David had just finished breakfast. The frugal meal hastily eaten, he had taken the Bible and was preparing for family worship. The door flew open and a farm laborer rushed in, crying that a great storm of wind was rising, and that, unless saved at once, the stooks would all be swept into the sea. 'Wind!' answered the old man, with a disdainful glance at the newcomer; 'wind canna' get a'e straw that's been appointed David Hope's. Sit down an' let us worship God!'

Now, if old David Hope's fine faith was justified,

it follows that there was no miscarriage of justice in the Valley of Armageddon. But is it justified? The question reminds me of a medal that was shown me while I was engaged upon this investigation. It was the medal struck by Queen Elizabeth to commemorate the destruction of the Spanish Armada. It bears the inscription: '*He blew with his wind and they were scattered.*' The text is inscribed in letters of gold on the monument on Plymouth Hoe.

His wind! His wind! His wind! What is it, or *Who* is it, that we have been putting on trial in the Valley of Armageddon?

Victor Hugo has a pretty story of the days in which the huge Armada was preparing. The little Infanta of Spain is standing by a fountain in the gardens of the Escorial. In her tiny hand the child holds a rose, in which her laughing face is buried, till the damask of cheek and flower can scarcely be distinguished. Suddenly an evening breeze sweeps the petals into the basin of the fountain, and dashes the smooth waters into miniature waves on which the scattered leaves toss like disabled hulks. 'What does it mean?' asks the wondering, half-frightened child, in whose hand only the bare stalk is left. 'Madame,' replies the Duenna, 'to princes belong all that is on earth—save only the wind!'

'Save only the wind!' says the Duenna.

'His wind! His wind!' say the medal and the monument.

'What does it mean?' All the world knows what

it means. The Infanta's shattered flower is a symbol of her father's shattered fleet. While the issue of the famous fight still hung in the balance, a wind sprang up from the south that filled the hearts of the Spaniards with consternation. Amid thunder that rent the skies, and lightning that dazzled the eyes, Drake was able to withdraw from the titanic conflict and leave the Armada to the wrath of heaven. 'The storm,' says Green, 'broke on them with a fury before which all concert and union disappeared.' The flower of the Spanish nobility perished like the rose blown to pieces in the young Infanta's hand.

The last witness to appear before my secret tribunal was James Boswell. In his *Life of Johnson* he tells a story of Doctor Young, the author of *Night Thoughts*. The doctor was staying with Lord Melcombe. One evening he had to fight his way to the house through a terrific storm. 'It is a fine night,' he said to Lord Melcombe on arrival. 'It is a fine night! The Lord is abroad!'

Now, let us gather up the fruits of our inquiry.

'The wind is the breath of the world,' declares our scientist.

'The wind is to the planet what the broom is to the parlor!' affirms our eminent physician.

'The stormy seasons on the rocky coasts provide a natural close time for crustacea!' observes Mr. Frank Buckland, the capable Inspector of English Fisheries.

‘Nae wind can get a’e straw that’s been appointed for me and mine!’ says David Hope.

‘Madame,’ says the Duenna to the pouting little Spanish princess, ‘to princes belong all that is on earth—*save only the wind!*’

‘*His* wind!’ says the Armada medal. ‘He blew with *His* wind and they were scattered.’

‘The Lord is abroad!’ exclaims old Dr. Young, coming in from the storm.

‘He gathereth the winds in His fists!’ cries Solomon.

‘Stormy wind fulfilling His word!’ cried Solomon’s sire before him.

‘What manner of man is this that even the wind and the sea obey Him?’ ask the astonished disciples.

III

In the Valley of Armageddon the Wind was charged with lawlessness, with rebellion, with anarchy, with obdurate refusal to recognize any authority but the authority of his own caprice. And, in spite of the emphatic testimony of the Four Elements, he was acquitted, and even thanked for his services to mankind. I thought, when I first heard of the verdict, that a grave miscarriage of justice had taken place. But I am convinced, after conducting an independent inquiry of my own, that the judgment of the Lords of Armageddon was sound. The turbulent and apparently unruly forces by which my body and my soul are alike buffeted, are not so

The Three Half-Moons

capricious as they seem. '*His* wind!' I will say to myself when next I find the blast particularly scorching, or particularly piercing, or particularly baffling. '*His* wind! *His* wind!'

There is ever and ever his boundless blue
And ever and ever his green, green sod;
And ever and ever between the two
Walk the wonderful Winds of God.

So sings Joaquin Miller. My experience in the Valley of Armageddon will make me a little more charitable when, the case against an accused person looking as black as black can be, I am tempted to form a harsh and hasty judgment.

VII

THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE

I

AT a delicious solitude in the vast New Zealand bush we were spending a few golden days together—John Broadbanks, his wife, and our two selves. It was a quiet and picturesque spot at which two rivers met; and, near their junction, we had discovered a natural arbor, where we used to sit reading and knitting and chatting. Resting there, enjoying in lazy luxury the bracing air from the hills, we could listen at will to the gentle murmur of running waters, to the soothing roar of the breakers on the distant bar, or to the lively melody of the bushbirds in the branches overhead. Spread out before us was a variegated panorama of water and woodland; while the foliage of our leafy snugery was sufficiently dense to afford us ample protection alike from fierce sunshine and from sudden shower. One evening we lounged there in the dusk, watching the harvest moon rise out of the shimmering waters. It was a Sunday; we had walked over to the service at the school-house three miles away; and were passing our favorite retreat on our way back to the boarding house.

'Oh dear,' exclaimed Lilian Broadbanks, sinking on to the mossy stump that she usually occupied, 'I'm tired; I must have a rest before going any further!' The mistress of my own manse took a seat on the grass at her friend's feet; while John and I leaned against the two young gums that guarded the entrance to the arbor. A Y-shaped flock of wild swans were flying by at an enormous height.

'Well,' said John, as soon as the birds had vanished in the twilight, 'and how did the sermon impress you?' The question was addressed to everybody in general and to nobody in particular.

'I thought it good,' replied his wife, 'especially the part in which he said that it seemed a pity that our Lord, who, as his addresses show, must have possessed a singularly simple and beautiful style, had left nothing *in writing* for the guidance of the church that He had lived and died to establish.'

There was a moment's silence. It was broken by John's humming very softly a few bars of the hymn that had brought the service to a close: it was a sure sign that he was thinking hard: and, a few seconds later, he spoke.

'But is it quite true?' he asked. 'There are many things in the Bible that do not bear the names of their authors. The story of the wonderful things that happened immediately before and immediately after the birth of Jesus can only have been written by Mary, although she did not sign her name. She simply handed her manuscript to Luke, who incor-

porated it in his Gospel.' The moon was by this time well up, transmuting the river into a stream of molten silver, and, shining full on John's face, it added a strange impressiveness to his deep and earnest voice.

'And then again,' he continued, 'who can have written the story of the Temptation in the wilderness? In the nature of things, it was a struggle in solitude. Only one Person was present. He, and He alone, can have written the record of it. That is why the two evangelists—Matthew and Luke—tell the story in the same words: they both copied from the same manuscript. And that manuscript is the most sublime fragment of autobiography in any literature. For grandeur of conception and splendor of expression there is nothing in Milton or Dante to compare with it; and yet it is so simple that a child can grasp its meaning.'

'Oh dear; oh dear!' exclaimed Lilian, jumping up and playfully taking her husband's arm, 'I'm letting you in for another sermon! How dare you, sir? Come on: let us hurry home: it's getting chilly here!' And off we went along the moonlit track by the water's edge. But, many a time since, John's little speech that night has rushed back upon my memory. And whenever I read in public the throbbing story of the Temptation in the wilderness, I feel inclined to ask the congregation to rise and listen with heads reverently bowed to the stately language of that immortal epic.

II

Man's life is a triangle; and the three temptations described in that noble fragment of divine autobiography represent the assaults made by the powers of evil upon each of its three sides.

The *first* temptation is the *Desert* Temptation—the temptation to nourish a faint and famished frame by turning the stones of the wilderness into bread.

The *second* temptation is the *Temple* Temptation—the Devil taketh Him up to the holy city and setteth Him on the pinnacle of the temple.

The *third* temptation is the *World* Temptation—he showeth him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them.

The *Desert!* The *Temple!* The *World!*—those represent the three sides of humanity's triangle. And, on each of those three sides, humanity is under perpetual assault.

III

See, for example, how the drama of the Old Testament—the history of the children of Israel—divides itself naturally into these three parts. I am tempted to call three witnesses.

As a witness to the *Desert* ordeal, I should call Dean Milman. One of the most vivid and picturesque passages in his *History of the Jews* is that in which he depicts their plunge into the arid and thirsty desert. And there, as the dean shows, they

became a mob of mutineers; and, as soon as their illustrious leader's back was turned, they abandoned themselves to a wild orgy of idolatry and shameless vice.

As a witness to the *Temple* ordeal, I should call Dean Stanley. In his *History of the Jewish Church*, Dean Stanley shows that, when the people settled down to their new life in a new land, the Temple dominated the entire situation. It was, he says, far more than mere architectural display. It supplied the framework of the people's history and moulded the national character. But a time came when the Temple was the most pitiful exhibition of the people's spiritual poverty. Grass grew on its paths, and its courts presented, as Dr. Marcus Dods puts it, the appearance of a knacker's yard. Only the diseased and decrepit beasts were brought to the altars. The soul of the nation was dead.

As a witness to the *World* ordeal, I should call Sir George Adam Smith. He deals with the later days in Babylon. And, sitting beside the rivers of Babylon, the hearts of *some* of the captives turned back to the old faith and the old worship. And the hearts of the *others*? 'Babylon,' says Sir George Adam Smith, 'Babylon was the centre of the world's trade, and it was in Babylon that the Jews first developed those mercantile instincts which have become their national character.' They forgot Zion. And when the time of dispersion came, and they were scattered to the four winds of heaven, instead

of leavening the empires of antiquity with the knowledge of the Unseen and Eternal, they simply earned for themselves a reputation for having a phenomenally keen eye for a bargain! And thus they succumbed to the third temptation: the Temptation of the *World*. That completes the triangle of Jewish history. The *Desert*, the *Temple*, and the *World* represent the three successive stages of their classic pilgrimage.

IV

Now, strangely enough, the history of the *church* divides itself into the same three parts. It, too, is a triangle. For the church has been tested and tried in each of the three historic crucibles.

In her early days she confronted the *Desert* Temptation. She embraced the ideal of asceticism. In the thirty-seventh chapter of his *Decline and Fall*, Gibbon shows how the eastern deserts became honeycombed by the cells of the hermits. Earnest men conceived the idea that spirituality could only be fostered in solitude. But it proved a tantalizing illusion. The inhabitants of the sandy cells discovered to their shame that they had brought their inbred vices with them. A famous painting portrays a saint seated in his narrow cave surrounded by a horde of devils whose contortions and grimaces make life intolerable. The artist's meaning is unmistakable.

Then the church entered upon her second stage.

For nearly a thousand years, the *Temple* dominated the world. The church had it all her own way. She had Europe at her feet. She ruled all nations; set up kings according to her fancy and dashed them from their thrones when they offended her. All men bowed to her authority. Yet the record never excites our pride. The centuries of the church's temporal ascendancy were barren and stagnant centuries. Progress stood arrested. Historians speak of those ages as 'the dark ages.' The days of the church's political prosperity were days of spiritual and intellectual sterility. The Temple stood out as the one immensity on the horizon; but all the world was darkened by its gloomy shadow.

The *Desert*! The *Temple*! And the *World*! For to-day the church confronts the third of her ordeals. The church no longer condemns; she tolerates. The world has removed all the disabilities and disqualifications that prevented Christian men from holding highest office; the church likes to flourish a few titled names on her programs and agenda-papers. The barriers have gone. This is all good—up to a point. But it has obvious dangers. The church must take care or she will succumb to the insidious perils of the *third* temptation as she succumbed to the *first* and the *second*.

V

Turning from the historical and ecclesiastical to the purely personal, is it not obvious that these are

the three temptations that we each have to face? The *Desert*: the *Temple*: the *World*!

The *Desert*! The enticements that make their appeal in solitude! Those who have read *The Cloister and the Hearth* will never forget that moving scene, near the end, in which poor Margaret tracks her lover to his hermit cave.

'Gerard,' she asks, 'why are you buried alive?'

'To escape temptation, Margaret!'

'Tell me, *have* you escaped temptation here? I ask because, when *I* am alone, my thoughts are far more wild and foolish than in company.'

'I must needs own,' confesses the melancholy hermit, 'that I have been more fiercely tempted here than in the world!'

And that is the exact situation! It is the tree that stands alone that feels the force of every wind that blows.

The *Temple*! The problems that arise out of my relationship with the church! I may join it, and, by bringing to my membership no intensity, no passion, no real devotion, I may make the church the weaker for my association with her. It is so easy to act by rote; to go through the regular forms; to do as everybody does. Or, on the other hand, I may stand aloof from the church. Recognizing her palpable flaws and failures, I may decide to hold myself apart from her. And yet the church is His body, His bride—the church that He loved—the church that He purchased with His own blood!

The temptations that rise in connection with the church are very real.

The *World!* The temptations that identify themselves with my shop, my office, my workroom! The temptations of business, of society, of everyday life!

VI

And this priceless gem of divine autobiography has been given us to show that *He* confronted all three!

The *Desert!* 'If thou be the Son of God,' suggested the tempter, 'use your heavenly prerogatives for personal ends! Let the stones of the desert become bread in your hands!' As though He, who, on the harvest fields of the world, turns millions of tons of stones into millions of tons of bread every year, needed, in order to prove his deity, to transmute those particular stones! But, just then, He was starving. He needed the bread, and needed it badly.

The *Temple!* 'Cast thyself down,' urged the tempter, 'and the angels shall come to thine aid!' And he, being lonely, wanted the angels, and wanted them badly.

The *World!* 'Fall down and worship me,' said the tempter, 'and the whole wide world shall be thine!' And he, who had come into the world to win it, wanted the world, and wanted it more than anything beside!

But, badly as he wanted the bread and the angels

and the world, he never hesitated. 'No,' he replied; and 'No' again; and 'No' a third time.

And, as a result, he got everything!

Bread! He employed the bread that he afterward broke as the most fitting emblem of his redemptive work!

The *Angels!* 'And, behold, the devil leaveth him and angels came and ministered unto him.'

The *World!* He has ever since been making his way toward that sublime consummation when all the kingdoms of this world are to be the kingdom of our God and of his Christ!

VII

'Wherefore,' says George Fox, in recording his strange experience in the hollow tree, and his wonderful conversion, 'wherefore, when Christ opened to me that he was tempted by the same devil and overcame him and bruised his head, and that through him and his grace, I might overcome also, I put my trust in him.' It is the only thing a tempted man can do.

VIII

THE SILKWORMS

I

‘WHY, whatever’s the matter? You look as though you have the weight of the world on your shoulders!’

It was my mother’s voice. I was only a small boy at the time. The winter was just yielding to the first overtures of spring, and I was sitting that evening on a hassock beside the fire. My face was buried in my hands and I was lost in serious thought.

‘Whatever’s the matter?’ asked my mother, startling me from my reverie.

‘Well, mother, I was thinking about my silkworms’ eggs. The spring is here; they will soon be coming out; and I have no food ready for them. I was looking at the mulberry tree this afternoon. The buds are only just beginning to show, and the leaves will be some time yet. I don’t know what I shall do!’

‘You silly boy!’ replied my mother, administering that curious mixture of tenderness and rebuke that comes so naturally from mothers, ‘you silly boy! Do you suppose that God manages His world as badly as that? If the mulberry leaves will be some time

yet, so will the silkworms! Depend upon it, they'll come together!

And so they did! And thus I learned that life is not a game of chance. There are wonderful laws of adjustment constantly at work. Things fit in!

This experience of my boyhood was brought vividly to mind by something that happened a night or two ago. I had occasion to call on old Lucy Harding. Lucy is a little old lady who contrives to make both ends meet by mothering the young people who board with her. A lovable little body is Lucy. I found Lucy sitting by the fire with a huge heap of socks and stockings on the table beside her. I took the chair opposite and we settled down to talk. Presently the conversation lapsed for a moment, and Lucy seemed to have set out on a voyage of her own.

'It's wonderful, wonderful, wonderful!' she said to herself, as she put down her work, allowed her hands to rest on her lap, and stared into the fire. A glow of grateful reminiscence swept over her gentle countenance and mingled pleasantly with the ruddy gleam of the firelight.

'What's wonderful?' I inquired, bringing her back to earth.

'Oh, it's wonderful, the way things fit in! I was thinking about yesterday. Yesterday, you know, was the public holiday. I made sure that Miss Dunstan, the milliner, and Mr. Pearson, the school-teacher, would go to their homes for the day. They

always do. But, as though to aggravate me, they both stayed here; and, to make matters worse, Miss Dunstan brought three girl friends in to tea! They chattered away as merrily as could be, but I couldn't listen to a word they said for worrying about the supper. Whatever should I do if they all stayed for the evening? The shops were shut, and I couldn't get anything in! But, would you believe it, they were all out at supper-time, and I had the house all to myself! So I needn't have worried after all!

Of course not! That's the belated discovery that we all make—*afterward!* We need not have worried! 'I am an old man now'—the words were carved by a monk on the wall of his cell—'I am an old man now: I have had lots of trouble; and most of it never happened.' Exactly! It never happened! My foodless silkworms never happened! Lucy Harding's crowded supper table never happened! Such things never happen, for the reason that Lucy stated so expressively as she gazed into the faces in the fire on Tuesday evening. *Things fit in!*

II

'The silkworms and the mulberry leaves will come together!' said my mother. And they did. The law of adjustment is very wonderful. Life is an intricate and complicated scheme. Each thing is a part of every other thing. Every stick is related to every stone, and every stone is related to every star. And

sticks and stones and stars all dovetail. They fit in. That is surely what Paul means when he said that *all things work*, and that *all things work together*, and that *all things work together for good*. Longfellow, in his 'Evangeline,' has a striking passage in which he shows how this law of adjustment—the adjustment of one set of things to another set of things—operates among the forests and prairies of the far west. The nights, he says, grew colder and colder.

All the signs foretold a winter long and inclement.
Bees, with prophetic instinct of want, had hoarded their honey
Till the hives overflowed; and the Indian hunters asserted
Cold would the winter be, for thick was the fur of the foxes.

The works of the great naturalists abound in instances of this kind of thing. Professor J. A. Thomson shows that sheep, transported to a cold country, quickly grow a longer fleece. When Darwin heard that, at Madagascar, there is an orchid with a spur eleven inches long, he at once remarked that there must also be a moth with a proboscis of that length. He knew, as all naturalists knew, and as my mother knew, that things are made to match and made to measure. He knew that the universe is one great scheme of dove-tailing. He knew, as old Lucky would say, that things fit in.

But, as invariably happens, the best illustration of the operation of this strange principle occurs, not in the pages of science, but in the pages of Scripture. Philip Doddridge made that discovery in a

way that he never forgot. In a period of terrible distress, when his whole life seemed clouded and every prospect dark, Doctor Doddridge felt one day that he must leave everything behind him for a while. He put on his hat, shut the door, and strode out on to the highway. His heart was desolate within him. 'But,' he says, 'passing by a cottage, the door of which stood open, I happened at that moment to hear a child reading aloud. I listened. "*Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and, as thy days, so shall thy strength be.*" The effect on my mind was indescribable. It was like life from the dead!'

Thy shoes shall be iron and brass. The girl in the cottage was reading the swan-song of Moses. The old leader was pointing the people to the tedious track before them. '*Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and, as thy days, so shall thy strength be.*' The law of adjustment, he avers, shall come into play at every turn. For the rough road there shall be stout shoes. For the weary day there shall be wondrous strength. The accidental shall dovetail with the incidental, the fortuitous shall fit into the fundamental. And, as Philip Doddridge and Lucy and I each found to our delight, the promise bravely bears the acid test of actual experience. Doctor Doddridge lived to smile at all the fears that he carried in his heart that morning! The hatching of my silkworm eggs exactly coincided with the unfolding of the mulberry leaves! Lucy found that her holiday supply of scones and cakes held out to

the end of the day, after all! It is always so. The wind is tempered to the shorn lamb. The eye adjusts itself to the light. The strength of each day is just about equal to the length of each day. We yawn and nod and feel a sense of weariness toward bedtime. We have had enough. Enough, yet not too much; or, at least, not much too much, or we should not love to linger by the fireside before finally departing.

III

Life is fortified by astonishing relays of reserves. Blucher is always just over the horizon. The sun goes down in the western sky, and, just as we fancy that we are to be left in impenetrable darkness, the stars rush out and the moon bathes the landscape in silver. Nature is never taken by surprise: she is ready for anything. New and exhausting conditions awaken and reveal new and unsuspected resources of vitality. Hence her skill in healing a wound, in curing a disease, and in fortifying beasts and birds against the rigors of unaccustomed climates. The law meets us at every turn. The strength of the *ordinary* day would be quite inadequate to the needs of the *special* day; but with the special day comes special strength. On the night of his escape from prison, Peter had superhuman help as long as he was confronted by superhuman tasks. But, when the iron gate had been opened, the angel vanished. 'There are frightful and horrible calamities

ties,' says Jean de La Bruyere, the French philosopher of the seventeenth century, 'there are frightful and horrible calamities which we dare not think of, and the mere sight of which makes us shudder. If it happens to a man to encounter them, he finds resources in himself of which he was not aware. He stiffens himself against his misfortune and bears it better than he could have expected.'

So the powers of this world link themselves with the powers of the world to come. We draw upon invisible and inexhaustible resources. The forces within match themselves with the forces without. The soul finds herself equal to her circumstances. As the day, so is the strength. *Things*, as Lucy would say, *fit in!*

IV

Life is a packet of astonishments. But the surprises supplement and balance each other. Like the animals entering the ark, they go in pairs. They are mated. I am told that, in some parts of America, a self-opening gate is often used on country roads. To open this gate, I understand, the traveler must fearlessly drive his wagon straight at it. Then, just when he seems about to crash into it, his wagon-wheels press the springs hidden beneath the surface of the road, and the gate swings open!

The gate blocks the road!—that is the *first surprise*.

The gate mysteriously opens!—that is the *second*.
My silkworms are out!—that is the *first* surprise.
The mulberry leaves are ready!—that is the *second*.

Miss Dunstan and her friends swoop down upon poor Lucy at teatime!—that is the *first* surprise.

But they, and all the other boarders, are absent at supper-time!—that is the *second*.

If only Lucy had known that that *second* surprise awaited her, she would have kept a quiet heart amid the clatter of the teacups, and would have thoroughly enjoyed the gossip of the excited young chattermags around her table. If only I had learned the secret that my mother treasured, I should not have looked that evening as if the weight of the world were upon me. When I see a blackbird on the lawn, I know that another bird is not far away. They go in pairs. So do our surprises.

Ian Maclaren once told a pretty story of a little blind girl at Drumtochty who had learned this subtle secret. 'If I canna see,' she said, and she spoke as if this were a matter of doubt and she was making a concession for argument's sake, 'if I canna *see*, there's naebody in the Glen can *hear* like me. There's no a footstep of a Drumtochty man comes to the door but that I ken his name, and there's no voice oot on the road that I canna tell. The birds sing sweeter to me than to onybody else, and I can hear them cheeping to one another in the bushes before they go to sleep. And the flowers smell sweeter to

me—the wallflowers and the carnations and the bonny moss roses—and I judge that the oatcake and milk taste the richer because I dinna see them. Na, na, ye're no to think that I've been ill-treated by my God, for if He dinna give me ae thing, He gives me mony things instead. And mind ye, it's no as if I'd seen once and lost my sight; that micht ha' been a trial, and my faith micht have failed. I've lost naething! my life has been all getting!

The blindness—that is the *first* surprise.

'All getting!'—that is the *second*.

And so, like the disciples on the Galilean roads, our surprises go forth two by two. The *second* supplements the *first* and satisfactorily completes the whole. Life's balance-wheels are very exact. When I see a man at the street-corner extract a live dog from a boy's cap, I instinctively pause. I feel confident that he has other tricks up his sleeve. Life has to be treated on the same principle. When it plays *one* surprise upon me, I wait impatiently for *the next*. And by the time that the performance is over I feel like Lucy Harding at the end of the public holiday. I see that one surprise is counter-balanced by another, and I see that, in a truly wonderful way, *things fit in*.

V

The days are not as bad as they look. I have often stood at the top of one hill and looked at the next. At that angle, the road up the distant slope

has seemed almost perpendicular and my heart has failed me in anticipation of the climb. But when I have descended the one hill and begun to mount the next, I have found it a very gentle incline after all. From the standpoint of to-day, to-morrow looks a very terrible affair. Sitting at the tea-table, Lucy's supper-table harrows all her soul. But the whole thing is an optical illusion. Life holds at command a host of invisible reserves. It has up its sleeve the most bewildering surprises. We must treat the future charitably and give it the benefit of every doubt. We must believe the unborn day to be honest until he has proved himself a rogue. We must take to-morrow on trust. I am very intimate with a household that is greatly addicted to the habit of reading aloud. But, in the case of almost every book that we have read, there has been a stage at which some member of the fireside semicircle would have tossed the volume into the flames. We have found, however, that it is not fair to judge the story at that stage. The book is a whole. And when we come to the end, and view each part in its relation to each other part, we recognize that the plot was skillfully worked out. It was with a similar feeling that, gazing into the fire, old Lucy looked back upon the public holiday.

All's well that ends well. The silkworm episode ended excellently. So did the day that gave poor Lucy such anxiety. So does life itself. I am certain that, when Lucy comes to the last stage of her

long journey, she will look back upon the whole pretty much as, that evening, she looked back upon one little slice of it. She will see that the scheme was skillfully thought out. She will see that it takes the shadows of the evening, as well as the sunlight of the morning, to make up life's perfect day.

'It is wonderful the way *things fit in!*' she said, as she gazed into the fire that night.

'It is wonderful the way *things fit in!*' she will say, when she holds the whole of her life in review.

The balance-wheels are exact. Life's adjustments are perfect. The length of the day tallies precisely with the strength of the day. Things fit in, as Lucy said; *all* things fit in!

IX

THE EAGLE'S NEST

I

THE scramble that led us to the eagle's nest was, I think, the stiffest proposition of the kind that I have ever tackled. My whole body was one great ache for days afterward. The dew was sparkling on the grass when we started, and rabbits were scurrying in all directions. The bush orchids were at their best, and the slopes were delicately draped in wild flowers. The song of the birds was at times almost deafening. As we passed through a belt of bush, a squirrel leapt from tree to tree beside us, and then, greatly daring, descended and skipped along in front. Every now and again he would turn cheekily round; sit facing us, with his tail gracefully curled behind him; wait until we were within a yard or two of him; and then go prancing on ahead once more. At the fringe of the bush he vanished, however, and, except for a fox that stole out from behind a huge boulder and crept stealthily down into the fern, we saw no other living creature in the course of our climb. The eagles have the heights pretty much to themselves. All the other birds and beasts prefer the lower levels.

We rested for lunch on a ledge of rock that com-

manded an enchanting view of the plains that we had left. The world seemed spread out at our feet. It was a glorious panorama. And, save when we broke the stillness with our voices, the silence was almost oppressive. Not a sound was to be heard. The barking of dogs, the singing of birds, and even the chirping of insects were left behind us. Such sounds belonged to the world far below.

The first indication that we were approaching something unusual was the atrocious smell. It grew worse and worse with every step that we took, becoming at last well-nigh insufferable. By this time, too, we began to notice, strewn in the long grass around us, the bleached bones of all sorts of animals and birds. The place was a perfect charnel-house. Then, drawing nearer to the precipice, our eyes were offended by the ghastly remains of various creatures in all stages of decomposition and decay. Here was half a rabbit; there was a hare so mutilated as to be scarcely recognizable and over yonder the head and shoulders of an opossum, the hind-quarters of a bandicoot, an iguana horribly mangled, and some young grouse that the bigger birds had torn to tatters. The hillside was a grim and noisome shambles.

We lay down, craned over, and, in a huge recess on the shelf of rock below us, we saw the home of the eagles. It had evidently been there for many years; and, each year, substantial additions had been made to it. It seemed to us that wagon loads of

material must have been woven into its construction. It was an immense affair, lined and made comfortable with fern and grass and feathers. Three eaglets—ugly little things with bristles like porcupines and beaks that seemed many sizes too large—jostled each other in the shadowy hollow of their rocky home. We watched them curiously for a moment; but only for a moment. The longer we stayed, the more overpowering the situation became. The whole shelf round the nest was littered with gruesome offal from which a thick steam and a hideous stench were rising. We turned away disgusted yet delighted. Glad as we were to have seen the nest, we were no less thankful to have left it.

II

It was Moses who, in his majestic swansong, unfolded the *Parable of the Eagle's Nest*. Amid the most fearsome and awe-inspiring scenery, he was about to die. The landscape was a wilderness of splintered peaks, jagged summits, scarped crags, beetling cliffs. Everything was wild, weird, precipitous, desolate, and grand. Moses reflected that the people were confronted by a hurricane of change. They were passing from one land to another; they were passing from one leadership to another; and they were passing from a life that was wild, restless, and nomadic to a life that was settled, agricultural, and domestic. In view of this whirl of transition, Moses gave them a Philosophy of Disturbances.

Employing an image suggested by the great birds soaring in the skies above him—the birds that had their nests amid those solitary fastnesses and gloomy ravines—he tells them that, *'As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings,'* so Jehovah had dealt with them. With the memory of my visit to the eagle's nest fresh in my mind, the picture did not at first attract me. An eagle's nest with its hideous surroundings makes up a picture that is by no means pleasant. But the Bible has a wonderful way of making sordid things sublime. Objects in themselves unlovely become the vehicles by which the most graceful and priceless truths are conveyed. The prodigal sitting beside his swine, tearing ravenously at their husks, is by no means a delectable conception; yet we would sacrifice half the poetry of the ages rather than have that gem torn from us. Let us take a second glance at the eagle's nest! The eagle's nest, Moses declares, is a revelation! Not only so, it is a revelation of God: *As the eagle . . . so the Lord*. What, I wonder, does it reveal?

III

It is a revelation of the *God Who Builds*. For now, that I come to think again, I am impressed by the fact that that immense nest among the crags has about it some very arresting qualities. It is, after all, a striking spectacle. The eyrie is so skillfully

chosen! The spot is so secluded, so strong, so safe! And how stoutly the foundations are laid! How cunningly branch is laid upon branch, stick dovetailed into stick, twig woven into twig! All the essential principles of engineering receive exemplification here. What architects and what builders these great birds are!

So the Lord, says Moses. *As the eagle . . . so the Lord*. He maintains that the eagles are but the symbols of Him by Whom they were taught their craft.

The God Who Builds *the Nations*! And no nation that failed to recognize his handiwork in its construction ever yet came to anything worth mentioning. Take our own! Of all people on the face of the earth we should most richly deserve to pass out into the night of oblivion and forgetfulness if we failed to recognize a divine hand in the shaping of our destinies. The *History of England* is, far and away, the greatest romance that has ever been written. There is nothing in legend or fable to compare with it. In the old days, in the absence of history, Englishmen wove for themselves pretty fancies like the story of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. Since then the stately drama of history has been enacted. The stories of Norman and Saxon, of Roman and Dane, of Alfred and Edward, of Cromwell and Pitt, of 'the spacious days of great Elizabeth' and the record reign of Queen Victoria—such annals have eclipsed

the luster of those earlier imaginings, and have outshone the dainty myths that the poets dreamed. The pageant is so impressive that we feel instinctively that the magnificent procession is being martialled, that the evolution is an ordered and prearranged scheme, that there is an intelligence, a will, a heart behind it all. We discover God.

The God Who Builds *the Churches!* Who can read the story of the Church—her foundation, her struggles, her sufferings, her triumphs—without feeling that the Church is a divine creation? Who can sing,

I love thy church, O God!
Her walls before thee stand,
Dear as the apple of thine eye,
And graven on thy hand,

without giving thanks for all that the Church has meant to men?

The God Who Builds *our Homes!* Round the dome of the Eddystone Lighthouse is a text: *Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it!* In view of the history of the Eddystone Lighthouse that passage is very suggestive. But I confess that once upon a time the text puzzled me. *'Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it!'* Is that quite true? Is it not possible for a man, without asking the divine help, to build a house? It is: and the text does not deny that it is. It simply says that, building a house, he builds it *in vain*. For the house that he builds will never

The Three Half-Moons

be anything but a *house*. And who wants to live in a *house*? We love to live in *homes*. And it is only by the magic touch of a divine hand that *houses* become *homes*. The heathen have no *homes*, says one of our most acute *philosophers*: they have but *houses*!

IV

It is a revelation of the *God Who Breaks*. '*As the eagle breaketh up her nest . . . so the Lord.*' If the eaglets are too comfortable, they will never attempt to fly. So the mother bird tears out the soft lining of the nest and exposes their tender skin to the hard twigs underneath.

'*So the Lord,*' says Moses. There are divine disturbances. The old home breaks up; the parents die; the family is scattered. The church is invaded by change; ministers leave; members go this way and that way. Our comfort is rudely violated. Like the eaglets, we are put on our mettle and are compelled to fend for ourselves.

V

It is a revelation of the *God Who Broods*. '*As the eagle fluttereth over her young . . . so the Lord.*'

She hovers over the nest. She would have her eaglets to feel that if they try—and fail—she is close at hand to save them. She seeks to awaken desire and excite them to emulation. As they see

the might of her wings, they may be tempted to try their own. That is the way of all young things.

'*So the Lord,*' says Moses. He draws near to us and makes His presence felt. In Browning's words:

God glows above
With scarce an intervention, presses close,
And palpitatingly, his soul o'er ours.

And never does His presence press upon us but we feel as the eaglets feel. They look up at the hovering bird and long to be like her. We look up at the hovering Presence and long to be like Him. Therein lies the significance of the New Testament story—the sweetest story ever told. God came very near to Man; assumed his nature and wore his flesh; and He did it in order that Man, too much oppressed by his own impotence, might spread his feeble pinions and soar into the skies.

VI

It is a revelation of the *God Who Bears*. '*As the eagle beareth them on her wings . . . so the Lord.*' The eaglets spread their baby pinions at last—and fall into the abyss! But, with a rush and a swoop, the mother bird plunges into the depth beneath them, and, catching them on her wings, bears them back to the nest on the shelf.

'*So the Lord,*' says Moses. Like the eagle, He bids us do what we have not strength to do in order that, in attempting it, we may acquire the strength to do it. Any fool can do what he *can* do: it takes

a man of some faith to do what he *cannot* do. Yet it is by such men that nations are saved, for they are the salt of the earth. 'Always do what you are afraid to do!' Emerson's aunt used to say to him; and, years afterward, he declared that it was *high counsel*. The eaglet that whimpers *I can't!* dies on the rock and adds its carcass to the carrion already there. But the eaglets that attempt to fly when flight seems hopelessly impossible, soon find themselves lords of the blue. That is what Moses meant. The man who, in the daring of faith, undertakes what he cannot perform will soon astonish the world by performing it.

PART III

I

THE BREAKING OF THE DROUGHT

WHEN the kings of Israel, Edom and Judah asked Elisha to pray for rain, he told them plainly to inaugurate a conservation scheme.

I

It was a time of drought. And, by that drought, the pride of these three haughty monarchs was humbled, their plans shattered, and their assembled forces reduced to absolute paralysis. *'The king of Israel went, and the king of Judah and the king of Edom; but there was no water for the host, nor for the cattle that followed it. And the king of Israel cried, Alas, that the Lord hath called these three kings together to deliver them into the hand of Moab.'*

'There was no water!' It is when the simplicities fail us that life becomes desperate. In the presence of drought, wealth becomes penury, power sinks into impotence, and the pomp of armies lies prostrate in the dust.

Drought! Drought! Drought! We in Australia know its meaning! How often have I visited a certain expanse of agricultural country half as big as England! As I have whizzed along its splendid roads in a motor car, I have viewed with delight

its smiling homesteads and its prosperous plains. Sometimes those broad acres have been a sheen of emerald, and sometimes an expanse of harvest gold. The flocks and herds upon the hillsides have been plump and sleek and glossy. The land was like a garden full of luscious fruits. And I have seen the same country in time of drought. The spreading plains were parched and dry and brown. The heat quivered from the hard and barren ground. Far as the eye could see, the fields that, at other times, had waved with glorious crops, were as brown and bare as the road along which I sped. No blade of grass appeared on hill or plain. The horizon was dry and desolate. The wind, when it awoke, brought no refreshment. It filled the arid air with clouds of dust which stung the face and parched the throat and almost suffocated one. Horses, cattle, and sheep lie here and there upon the cracked and baking ground, their thin flanks panting, their heads drooping, and their tongues hanging swollen from their open mouths. Swarms of flies add to their misery, while the crows—to whom a famine is a feast—fly in clouds from tree to tree, waiting to pounce upon them and pick out their eyes as soon as they are weak enough to offer no resistance. Thousands of these valuable animals are already dead, and their bodies add a new horror to the foetid atmosphere. Down in the valley you see the hot, white stones over which, at other times, the brook has laughed and babbled. In the farms and homesteads the

suffering is just as terrible. Little children are crying for water. Their parents can do nothing for them, but are themselves faced by irreparable loss, and, in some cases, by total ruin. I have seen a farmer take his gun and go out, brushing his eyes with his sleeve, to shoot the horses for which he had felt so warm an affection and in which he had taken so great a pride. At one big station three thousand splendid horses were slaughtered the other day under such conditions. And, all the while, Nature seems to delight in tantalizing those whom she tortures. Each day brings with it some promise of rain. A boy will beg his father not to shoot his favorite pony today. See how the clouds are gathering! The heavens are overcast a chilly breath comes into the fervid air; there is going to be a storm! The household is too excited that night to go to bed. All want to be awake when the rain comes. But the storm, when it breaks, is but a storm of wind. It shakes the homestead; it sweeps the dust in clouds across the fields; it sucks up every drop of moisture that remains, and leaves the people utterly disconsolate.

Such is a drought.

Three kings and three armies! But three kings and three armies rendered impotent just because *'there was no water'!*

II

Very few tears have, I suspect, been shed over the plight of these three kings. We instinctively

feel that it is rather a good thing for men who become '*drunk with sight of power*' to be made to feel that their '*reeking tube and iron shard*' are, after all, but '*valiant dust that builds on dust.*' Three kings and three armies are prone to think that the world is at their mercy. Let the water supply give out, and where are they? Dr. Samuel Cox says that it is good for a gardener—even a gardener who is passionately devoted to his work, and extremely learned and skillful in manipulating it—to find, now and then, that his best efforts may be brought to nought by a spell of unfavorable weather. 'For,' the doctor says, 'even a gardener is apt to slip into the persuasion that he owes all that he produces to his own art and skill, and he is all the better for being reminded, by the element of uncertainty which enters into his calculations, that he owes far more to God than to any wisdom of his own.' Mr. Platt's old gardener had learned that lesson.

He leant, at sunset, on his spade.

(Oh, but the child was sweet to see,
The one who in the orchard played!)

He called, 'I've planted you a tree!'

The boy looked at it for a while,

Then at the radiant woods below;
And said, with wonder in his smile—

'Why don't you put the leaves on, though?'

The gardener, with a reverent air,

Lifted his eyes, took off his hat—
'The Other Man, the One up there,'
He answered, '*He* must see to that.'

Nobody can live in a world like this, with eyes and ears wide open, without feeling every day of his life a flush of pride as he surveys the bewildering pageant of human triumph and achievement. Every day we master for the first time some ancient problem, read some ancient riddle, discover the cure for some ancient malady, harness to beneficent ends some ancient force, and put a new complexion upon the face of the world. It is very wonderful, very delightful, very exciting. But in our excitement we must not forget. There is a point at which the most enchanting horizon fades into the sky-line. There is a point at which earth ends and heaven begins. Even three kings and three armies cannot do everything. Indeed, when the water fails, they can do nothing! They are helpless, and worse than helpless.

III

The three kings in their extremity turned to the prophet. It is not the only occasion, in human history, on which the monarch has turned to the minister, the world to the church. It is often said that the masses are outside the churches. Perhaps: I do not know! But it is astonishing how few men go down to their graves without seeking the services of a minister at bedside or at graveside. When men come to the end of themselves—figuratively or literally—they like Elisha to be somewhere handy.

'And Elisha said, Thus saith the Lord, Make this

valley full of ditches, for the valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye and your horses and your cattle.' It was a case in which swords were turned into ploughshares and spears into pruning-hooks. Three kings and three armies marched out expecting to be delivered by means of their *spears*; but, in the event, they were delivered by means of their *spades*. We seldom win our triumphs with the weapons to which, at the outset, we attached most importance. When he enters college, a theological student imagines that his success depends on his *culture*, and, perhaps, at that stage, it is as well that he cherishes the illusion. But, looking back upon life fifty years later, he sees that his victories were won, not by his *culture*, but by his *character*; it was *that* that lent driving power to all that he did and wrote and said.

I always ponder this incident, and preach on it, when I am asked to pray for rain. Here are the men of three armies digging ditches in time of drought. As they tore up the dry soil, the wind blew the dust from their shovels; but still, they were preparing for the time when the valley should be flooded! They were working on sound lines. No nation has a right to pray for rain until it has built dams and aqueducts and reservoirs. Intercession and conversation must go hand in hand. How can I ask heaven to send rain unless I have made ample provision for its storage? Has a child a right to ask his father for money, and more money, and

still more money, while, in his pocket, there is a hole through which he loses every coin that he deposits there? Has a drunkard a right to pray that his children may be miraculously provided with food and raiment, while he is squandering their substance in degrading dissipation? When kings consult Elisha concerning the absence of rain, it is the duty of the prophet to command them to make the valley full of ditches.

IV

In any case, it is a good thing to behave as though you expected the thing you most need. Charles Wagner, himself an Alsatian, says that an Alsatian peasant, when he builds a house, desires nothing more than that the storks should come and make their home upon his roof. He loves them for their own sake; he loves them because they are, like the swallows, 'the beloved forerunners of the spring'; and he loves them because he regards them as propitious omens, a promise of good fortune. And so, when he builds his home, he furnishes the roof with places in which the storks can make their nests. And what is it that the poet sings?

Fence thou from off the dinning street
A little realm of pastoral air;
Keep but a green bough for his feet,
And God will send a blackbird there.

It is a sound principle: if you really want the rain, construct the reservoir; if you really want the

bird, provide the bough! Mary Moffatt believed in this kind of thing. She had labored for seven long years at Kuruman, but without the slightest apparent result. Mrs. Greaves, of Sheffield, wrote out from the Homeland asking if there was anything that she could send that would help Mrs. Moffatt in her work.

‘Yes,’ replied the dauntless woman, ‘send us out a Communion Service: we *shall* need it some day!’

It took more than a year for that letter to reach its destination, and for the Communion Service to be delivered at Kuruman. During that year a number of Africans made the great confession; it was decided to welcome the converts into church membership at the Lord’s Table; and the date for the sacred and joyous festival was fixed. And, to the delight of all concerned, a little box, containing the Communion Service, reached the Mission Station a few hours before the time appointed for the celebration!

V

The armies dug the trenches and the waters quickly filled them. I said just now that I had seen the horrors of a drought: I have seen, too, the joy that marks its breaking. To those who have had no experience of such things, the story would seem ridiculous. Such people are unable to realize what music may sometimes reside in the patter of rain-drops. What a time it is! Every window is thrown

open! Every member of the household, from the old man with his crutch to the toddler on the floor, crowds to lattice or casement or doorway to feast his eyes upon the falling rain! Excitedly they stretch forth their hands that they may feel it splash upon their upturned palms. Young men and maidens scamper out into it; dance for very joy as it drenches their clothes and trickles through their hair; they revel in the luxury of getting wet again! I have seen big, bronzed, rawboned Australian farmers unable to conceal their emotion or repress their tears as, after a prolonged drought, they have gazed once more upon a bounteous rain.

I have heard people boasting that they are prepared for the worst. It is nothing to boast about. Most people are prepared for *the worst*; very few are prepared for *the best*. As long as the three kings were unprepared for the coming of the water that they wanted, no water came. They dug the trenches, and straightway, the flood came streaming in! Life has a way of treating us according to our expectations. The stork comes to the roof of that Alsatian who prepares for him a resting-place; the blackbird sings his song upon the bough provided for him; the converts at Kuruman are ready to be welcomed by the time that the Communion Service arrives! If the canary escapes, it is worth while setting the cage, with the door wide open, out in its usual place. Dickens had a secret in his heart when he described Mr. Peggotty as putting Little Emily's room in

The Three Half-Moons

order every night as though he confidently expected her, that very evening, to come home. And therein lies the beauty of the story of the prodigal son. As long as his boy was in the far country, the father was always on the look-out for him. And the prodigal, well knowing his father's heart and mind and temper, could not long resist the magnetism of that sublime expectancy.

II

SKIPPER DUNLOP

I

SKIPPER DUNLOP was no skipper at all. Indeed, we had no reason to believe that he had ever been to sea. How he came to be called the Skipper, nobody seemed to know. His appearance may have suggested it. Although of less than medium height, there was something commanding in his stature. He was square-shouldered, thick-set, and of easy movement. His face was bronzed and weatherbeaten, and its ruddiness was thrown into strong relief by the shock of snowy hair that surmounted his brow. He had laughing grey eyes; he walked with a jaunty stride; and he wore a reefer jacket, which materially assisted the maritime illusion.

The Skipper was a bachelor, but we never twitted him with that misfortune. Nobody quite knew why; but everybody understood that the subject was a painful—and therefore a forbidden—one. A portrait of a fair young girl hung in his bedroom; but he never referred to it; and I asked no questions. It was whispered that she had died a week or so before the date fixed for the wedding. He was a member of the Church; but he would never accept office.

'I have plenty of time on my hands,' he said to me one day, 'and, if any of the men are ill, I shall be pleased to drop in and have a chat with them.'

He was as good as his word. In passing from one sick-room to another, I was often told of the comfort and delight that our Mosgiel sufferers derived from the Skipper's visits.

'There's only one thing that I can't make out,' Sandy McAlister said to me one day. 'Before the Skipper leaves, he always takes down the Bible and reads a few verses. But he usually turns to the same passage. It's that bit from one of the prophets—Micah, isn't it? *Who is a God like unto thee that pardoneth iniquity because he delighteth in mercy?* The name he gives to it is, "the text among the pictures," and, surely enough, when he reads it, I always see more in the verses than I notice at any other time.'

It happened that, not long afterward, I myself was ordered to spend a fortnight in bed, and the Skipper was among my visitors.

'You won't go,' I said, as he rose to take his departure, 'you won't go till you've read a verse or two.' He seemed pleased; resumed his seat; and turned without a moment's hesitation to the passage of which Sandy had spoken.

'Who is a God like unto thee that pardoneth iniquity because he delighteth in mercy?'

'You seem very fond of those words, Skipper!' I ventured.

‘Yes,’ he replied, his eyes moistening, ‘and I have good cause to. It was those words that saved my soul from shipwreck forty years ago; and they seem more wonderful every time I read them. I call it “the text among the pictures.” Whenever I read it—and I read it pretty often—it seems to me that the prophet was using one phrase after another, each phrase containing a picture, as if he hoped that, if one picture failed to show the greatness of God’s mercy, another would succeed. “*He pardoneth iniquity . . . He passeth by transgressions . . . He trampleth our iniquities under His feet . . . He will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.*” It is wonderful, wonderful, *wonderful!*’ he exclaimed feelingly; and for a few minutes he sat by my side in rapturous and expressive silence. He rose abruptly and said good-bye; yet, even after he had gone, the pictures of which he had spoken seemed to be hanging round my bedroom walls. Let us look at them!

II

This is the *First!* ‘*He pardoneth iniquity!*’ It is a picture of the exercise of the royal prerogative. Here, in her beautiful drawing-room, is Queen Victoria—a girl of eighteen. Lord Melbourne has arrived with a budget of papers, all of which require her attention and some her signature. Among them are some documents relating to a wretched man, who, convicted of a terrible crime, lies in a condemned cell, awaiting the hour of execution.

'And must I become a party to his death?' asked the gentle young queen shrinkingly.

'I fear that that is so,' replied the statesman, 'unless your Majesty desires to exercise your royal prerogative of mercy.'

The queen asked him to explain his meaning; and, finding to her delight that she had it in her power to pardon the guilty wretch, she announced that, as an expression of the spirit in which she desired to rule, she proposed, on this first occasion, to avail herself of her authority; and she wrote the word 'Pardoned' across the paper before her.

He pardoneth our iniquities!

The Royal Prerogative!

This is the *First* of the Pictures!

III

And this is the *Second*! '*He passeth by our transgressions!*' He *passeth by*, as, on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, the priest *passed by* on the other side. He cuts them dead. He studiously avoids them. They may wave their hands to Him, but He has no eyes for them; they may call aloud for judgment, but He has no ears. He deliberately *passeth by our transgressions*: that is the *Second* of the Pictures.

IV

The *Third* is still more striking. '*He trampleth our iniquities under his feet.*' Life has its mag-

nanimous destructions. We remember how, with unparalleled magnificence, Sir Richard Whittington entertained King Henry the Fifth at the Guildhall. And when the excitements of the evening were at their height, Sir Richard took the king aside and conducted him to a private apartment in which a brazier, loaded with rare and sweet-smelling logs, was burning brightly. Then, drawing from his breast the documents that proved the king's enormous financial obligations to himself, he dropped them, one by one, into the blazing brazier, and assured His Majesty of the pleasure that the spectacle afforded him. Or who that has ever read Thackeray's *Esmond* can forget the similar scene that brings that story to its climax? In the presence of the prince, and of his cousin, Esmond takes the documents that establish his own title to the marquise of Castlewood, and, one by one, commits them to the flames.

“Here, may it please your Majesty,” he says, “is the Patent of Marquis sent over by your royal father to Viscount Castlewood, my father; here is the witnessed certificate of my father's marriage to my mother, and of my own birth and christening. These are my titles and this is what I do with them! Here go Baptism and Marriage, and here the Marquise and the Sign Manual!” And, as he spoke, he set the papers burning in the brazier.’

‘He trampleth our iniquities under his feet.’ He destroys everything that stands between us and our

inheritance. He blots out the handwriting that is against us. He grinds to powder all the evidence that condemns.

V

And the *Fourth* of the Pictures? The *Fourth* is the most vivid and striking of them all. '*He shall cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.*' The depths of the sea; we seldom realize their immensity! Mr. John Murray, an eminent authority on the subject, points out that the land is as nothing compared with the sea. To begin with, the land area of the globe is only about one-third of the water area. Then the land is low-lying, while the ocean is deep. The mean height of the land above sea level is two thousand feet; the mean depth of the ocean is fourteen thousand. The bulk of dry land above sea-level is twenty-three million cubic miles; the bulk of water is three hundred and twenty-three millions. You could hurl all your continents and islands into the depths of the sea and they would all be hidden beneath two miles of water!

I received some time ago an interesting letter from the Rev. Robert Elder, whose fine work in the Argentine forms one of the brightest features of South American history. Mr. Elder tells of an interesting conversation he had just enjoyed with a young Italian, who called to discuss with him some statements that Mr. Elder had made concerning the forgiveness of sins. Not far from where they sat

were some wharves, piled to an enormous height with vast stacks of wheat on their way from the Argentine fields to the European markets.

'Why,' exclaimed the Italian, sadly, 'if all my sins were grains of wheat, and if all the steamers and sailing ships afloat were to come into port to load them, my sins would fill all their holds and there would still be heaps left over!'

'Well,' replied Mr. Elder, 'even if what you say be true, there is still mercy enough for you. For suppose that each sin is a grain of wheat, and suppose that there are enough of them to load all the vessels afloat, what of that? I have something to show you which will astonish you. For look! We are told that *God will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea!* If all the ships were to sink into the depths of the sea, there would be plenty of room for them at the bottom, wouldn't there? So much greater is God's mercy than your iniquity!'

'That,' writes Mr. Elder, 'satisfies him! He cast himself upon the infinite grace, and the change in him is wonderful!'

The depths of the sea! He shall cast all our sins into *the depths of the sea!* That is the *Fourth Picture!*

VI

But, after all, it was not the pictures, but the text among the pictures—the text that is illustrated by the pictures—that captivated the Skipper's heart.

'He pardoneth iniquity because he delighteth in mercy.' Dr. Alexander Whyte has a great story about the Skipper's text. I have often regretted that I only came upon it some years after I had committed the Skipper to his last resting place; it would have hugely delighted him.

'I was out visiting one day,' Dr. Whyte says, 'and I took this for my text when going up and down among the people, at death-beds and sick-beds: "*He pardoneth iniquity because he delighteth in mercy.*"' I was wondering what I would speak about, and a voice within me said, "Just take that which has been keeping your own drowning head above water this last week!" So I took that message to every house I went to, east and west, high and low. And, after my afternoon's visiting was over, I had some church business to do with Doctor Carment, one of the ablest lawyers in Edinburgh and one of the greatest saints. After finishing it, he pushed aside his parchments and pens and, looking across the table at me with a pair of burning eyes, he said: "Ha'e ye ony word for an auld sinner like me?" If it had been a revival meeting, I would not have wondered at that, but in a lawyer's office, among all the law papers! I was afraid almost to speak in his presence, but I recollected my message and said: "*He pardoneth iniquity because he delighteth in mercy,*" and escaped out of the room. Next morning I received, upon office paper, a note from him. "Dear friend," he said, "I was at hell's gate to-day. I was

in great darkness, and no word of God could have been more helpful than this: '*He pardoneth iniquity because he delighteth in mercy.*' When I am overcome, and in darkness and distress, I shall always face the Devil and my own conscience and God's accusing law with that: 'Yes,' I will say, 'it is true: *He pardoneth iniquity because he delighteth in mercy!*' " "

VII

'It's *the reason why that I like!*' said the Skipper, when I visited him for the last time. 'If a man were asked *why* God forgives sins, he would find it pretty hard to say. But there it is in black and white: "*He pardoneth iniquity because He delighteth in mercy.*"' It was that *because* that settled me. Many a time, as a young fellow, I went to church and attended evangelistic meetings. I heard most of the great preachers. But somehow—I dare say it was my fault—I got the impression that, if I asked God to forgive me my sins, He would examine my case coldly, judicially, critically, as though trying to find some flaw in it that would justify Him in rejecting my plea. *Perhaps* my sins were not the kind of sins He can forgive! *Perhaps* I haven't asked in the right way! *Perhaps* my faith isn't of the true pattern! But, one Sunday morning, I went to church with . . . with . . . with a friend—he glanced at the portrait on the bedroom wall—and the preacher took for his text: "*He pardoneth iniquity because*

he delighteth in mercy." He told us that God has his pleasures just as we have, and that this is the greatest pleasure of all. *He delighteth in mercy.* He spoke of the joy in the presence of the angels—that is, the joy that the angels see in the face of God—whenever a sinner repents. And he closed by quoting these lines of Faber's:

"Come, come to his feet and lay open your story
Of suffering and sorrow, of guilt and of shame;
For the pardon of sin is the crown of his glory,
And the joy of the Lord to be true to his name."

"That settled me! No more thoughts about judicial scrutiny and reluctant forgiveness! The pardon of sin the crown of his glory! The joy of the Lord! "*He pardoneth iniquity because he delighteth in mercy.*" That was the text that saved my soul from shipwreck forty years ago—the text among the pictures—and I've read it at every bedside to which I have gone, ever since.'

This was the story that he told me when, one bleak winter's afternoon, I called to see him for the last time. He lived in a little cottage at the end of a right-of-way. The garden, usually well kept, appeared neglected and disconsolate as I walked up the path that day. The ground was sodden with heavy rain, and everything was looking its worst. But, somehow, this did not occur to me as I came out again, thinking of the story that the Skipper had just unfolded to me. And, standing at his

graveside a few days later, I could think of nothing more suitable to say. I passed on his text—the text among the pictures—and I knew that if, down there in his coffin, the Skipper had ears to hear, he would find more music in its repetition than in the stateliest panegyric that human lips could utter.

III

THE PULL OF THINGS

THE people of Lochlee were very fond of Davie McPhail. The little lad was stone blind; yet, despite his heavy affliction, he showed as keen and as blithe a spirit as any on that Scottish country-side. The villagers said that there was a far-away look in his sightless eyes, as though, seeing nothing that they saw, he nevertheless peered into things that they were not permitted to behold. When, in the summer of 1871, Dr. Thomas Guthrie and Dr. John Ker were spending their holiday among the Grampians, they fell in love with Davie. They came upon him several times, and, each time, he furnished them with some fresh cause for wonder. They were tramping one afternoon across a rugged and romantic mountain-side. For hours they revelled in the varied panorama of crag and torrent, wood and waterfall, and saw no sign of life except the herds of red deer browsing down in the glen. All at once they were astonished at seeing, in the distance, a boy's kite. Their surprise was intensified when, on drawing near, they found Davie crouching among the fern on the hillside, holding the string. Clasp- ing the twine firmly, he moved his hands to and fro, sometimes pressing them to his breast and

sometimes holding them out at arm's length. His face shone as with secret ecstasy.

'Why, Davie lad,' exclaimed Doctor Ker, 'what's the good of *your* having a kite? You can't even see it!'

'No, sir,' replied Davie, '*but I like to feel it pull!*'

The incident has often struck me as being profoundly significant. We are affected more than we know by forces that we cannot see, but of which we feel the pull. It is by the pull of things that our destinies are shaped. We are no sooner out of our cradles than it begins to weave its magic spell about us. Here is a little lassie who is never so happy as when tending a bird with a broken wing, or a dog with a fractured leg, or a kitten with a crushed paw. It does not occur to her that, in years to come, she will take her place in history as the Lady of the Lamp—the most famous nurse of all time; she is feeling the first faint tugs of destiny, that is all. Here is a boy who, on Saturdays, never goes off with the school eleven or with the village football team. Week after week he makes his way across the fields to the trout stream that skirts the edge of the wood, and spends the whole day in building rustic bridges, in constructing mimic dams, and in digging channels by means of which he connects his toy reservoirs with the pond down by the mill. If you were to tell him that, in forty years' time, he would be the greatest living engineer, and would be entrusted with the task of bridging the world's

mightiest chasms, damming the world's broadest rivers, and constructing the world's most splendid aqueducts, he would laugh incredulously. This is all hidden from him, as the kite is hidden from the blind boy. He is merely feeling the pull of destiny. One boy builds his raft on the beach and launches it among the breakers, without dreaming that he will one day be a celebrated navigator and push his adventurous keel into strange uncharted seas. Another spends all his time in collecting curious grasses, bright berries, dainty sea-shells and rare bird's eggs, and has not the faintest suspicion of the fact that his works on natural history will one day be translated into a score of languages and be studied on five continents.

A man has but to poke about for half an hour in the biographical section of a public library in order to see how numerous such cases are. You reach down one volume after another. Widely as they may differ in other respects, they agree in this. The book in your hand may be the life of a poet, or of an explorer, or of an inventor, or of some brilliant military genius; it does not matter. If you turn to the opening chapters you will invariably find some evidence of the mysterious drawings and pullings and tuggings of an invisible destiny.

Every classical biography constitutes itself an unintended commentary on the universality and authority of the pull of things. It is by means of the pull of things that the continents and oceans

have all been opened up. The Maoris declare that, once upon a time, their race dwelt on a wonderful and beautiful island, the mythical isle of Hawaiki. The climate was soft and luxurious; the soil was rich and bountiful; without the necessity for toil, the inhabitants enjoyed all that heart could wish. But, notwithstanding all this, there were always some among them who were restless and dissatisfied. They pointed across the waste of waters and talked of lands beyond the sea. Having already built small canoes in which they could sail from one part of their island coast to another, they at length built larger canoes and ventured forth in search of the lands of which they dreamed. Long before the Vikings of the North had turned their frowning figureheads seaward, these Vikings of the South had completed voyages as wonderful as any in the history of the world. From island to island, and from continent to continent, they groped their way. Deterred neither by the equatorial fervors of the tropics nor by the biting snowstorms of the extreme south, the vast Pacific could withhold no secret from them. Plunging into 'the long, long wash of Australasian seas,' they sailed on and on across the silent waste of waters, steering their course among volcanic isles and coral reefs, until they had discovered New Zealand on the one hand and landed on the South American continent on the other. What was it that led these dusky pioneers to leave their soft and sunny isle and to court such hardships

and privations? They had no more seen the lands for which they sailed than the blind boy had seen his kite. But they had felt the pull of things; and the pull of things had lured them across the wide, unfriendly oceans.

In a slightly different setting the story has been written again and again. What is wrong with this young Genoese sailor? Why cannot he be content with Europe and Asia? Are these vast continents, which have satisfied a thousand generations, not broad enough for him? Are the oceans that he has already sailed not vast enough for his frail craft? Why is he always gazing wistfully westward? Why does he pass so restlessly from court to court, begging for ships with which to sail into the unknown? Christopher Columbus is feeling the pull of things: an undiscovered continent is tugging at his heart. Why is Livingstone babbling in the delirium of death about the fountains, the unseen fountains, the fountains of Herodotus, the fountains of the Nile? Has he not already discovered lakes as large as oceans, and waterfalls that have taken their places among the wonders of the world? Why, then, can he not content himself? It is the old story: he is feeling the pull of things. The unseen is drawing him on. At the portals of Australia House, in the Strand, Londoners admire a fine group of statuary by Mr. Harold Parker. It represents *The Awakening of Australia*. A veiled female figure is stretching herself, as though rousing herself from slumber.

At the base are a pair of statues depicting the work of the explorer. In the *one*, the pathfinder—robust, sinewy, full of vigor—is examining the chart on which his daring project is based. In the *other*, the same man—gaunt, emaciated, exhausted—is laying his bones on the trail that he has blazed. The noble figures represent the pathos of all our continents and oceans. Whenever I read of a gallant young soul setting out in quest of the undiscovered, and whenever I hear of his lonely death on the burning sands or in the frozen snows, I remind myself that the pull of things has inspired another hero—and claimed another victim.

Or let us turn our faces in a fresh direction. Here is a young fellow sprucing himself up, inspecting himself in the mirror, and setting off to spend the evening at a house some distance away. He goes there often; he scarcely knows why. Nor can he satisfactorily explain to himself the punctilious pains that he takes to appear at his best on these occasions. Let it be granted that, in the home that he visits, there is a graceful and attractive girl. But, obviously, he does not go to see *her*. Why, he scarcely speaks to her all the evening! It is true that his heart beats more quickly and his blood rushes more hotly through his veins when she enters the room; but that is as far as it goes! His conversation is all with her father and brothers. He has not yet made life's great discovery. He does not know that he is in love. He only knows that, as soon as the evening

meal is over, his feet turn involuntarily in one direction. He is feeling the pull of things.

And those things of which he feels the pull are mighty things. Every man is the apex of two pyramids. His personality is the apex of the pyramid of his ancestry. Looking at the past from his point of view, all its genealogies narrow down to *him*. Again, his personality is the apex of the pyramid of his posterity. Looking at the future from his point of view, all its coming generations begin with *him*. The pull that this young lover feels is the pull of the ages. It is the tug of his home, of his family, of his race, of his tribe, of his line, of his posterity. All the unseen years are dragging at his heart. All the unborn ages are pulling him, evening after evening, toward that other house some distance away.

I recall to-day a wild, wintry night in my early ministerial experience in which quite another aspect of this matter burst upon me. The snow lay deep upon the ground; two old ministers had come over to Mosgiel to assist me in a special service; and I was driving them to their homes. Each of them had done a great lifework, and each was universally revered and beloved. After a while a conversation sprang up between them to which I listened with the most rapt attention. The necessity for watching narrowly the horse's footsteps on such a night excused me from participation in the discussion.

'Now look, Cameron,' Mr. Harris suddenly exclaimed, 'I enjoyed every word of your address to-

night; but in the course of my ministry I have often doubted whether I, who was preaching to others, was myself a genuine Christian. Have you ever felt such misgivings? And, if so, how did you deal with them?’

‘My dear Harris,’ Mr. Cameron replied, giving a little laugh that had a world of seriousness in it, ‘I have passed that way hundreds and hundreds of times. And I’ll tell you how, under such circumstances, I reasoned with myself. I reminded myself that I was never so happy as when preaching the gospel. The greatest rapture I have ever known was the ecstasy I have sometimes felt when proclaiming the love of God for men. And I asked myself how that unutterable elation of the spirit was to be explained unless, in my heart of hearts, I really loved the Saviour whom I preached.’

‘Well, that’s very singular!’ replied Mr. Harris, ‘that argument never occurred to me. But many a time, when I have been assailed by suspicions concerning my own soul’s salvation, I have reminded myself of the delight that I have felt in the society of Christian people. I have remembered the words: *We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren.* Why should I revel in their company unless I really shared their faith? And, many and many a time, *that* reflection has dispelled my fears.’

I do not suppose that either of these old ministers dreamed for a moment that I was hanging so in-

tently upon his words. Within three years of that snowy night, I had followed them both to their last resting-places. But very, very often the conversation of that memorable drive has rushed back upon me. It will be seen at once that both these good men were delivered, in the day of their depression, by the pull of things. There was nothing in their arguments that would have convinced anybody but themselves. They could not produce the kite: they could only speak of the pull. *One* feels the pull of the Christian evangel, the *other* feels the pull of Christian fellowship.

'I like to feel the pull,' said Davie McPhail to Doctor Ker.

'I like to feel the pull!' said those two good old men on that wintry night.

It is much the same with things within the veil. Macaulay says that all the volumes of argument concerning the immortality of the soul represent a mere beating of the air. 'Not one of the sciences in which we surpass the Blackfoot Indians throws the smallest light on the state of the soul after the animal life is extinct,' he says. 'All the philosophers, ancient and modern, who have attempted, without the help of revelation, to prove the immortality of man, from Plato down to Franklin, have failed deplorably.' And yet, as Hamlet exclaims in his soliloquy, and as Addison says in his apostrophe to Plato, we all feel the stirrings of immortality within us. Like sea-birds that, in the heart of a continent, feel

the instinct of the ocean in their blood, we are conscious of the boundless, the illimitable, the eternal.

It must be so! Plato, thou reasonest well;
Else whence this pleasing hope, this fond desire,
This longing after immortality?
'Tis the divinity that stirs within us;
'Tis heaven itself that points out an hereafter
And intimates eternity to man!

None of us have seen the kite, but we have all felt the pull. And a wise man, feeling the pull, will be quick to recognize its high significance, and will shape the course of his life accordingly.

The pull of the unseen! The magnetism of the invisible! It is the very core of the Christian faith. *'Whom having not seen, we love!'* exclaims Peter; and the whole Church joins him in acclaiming the steady tug of that sublime invisibility.

IV

CORRUGATED IRON

It is a great thing to be able to dispense with corrugated iron. I made this discovery in my Mosgiel days.

'No corrugated iron!' exclaimed John Broadbanks, with startling abruptness.

The prohibition seemed strangely irrelevant. I was spending a few delightful days at the Silverstream Manse, and, on that perfect summer morning, we were sitting at breakfast in a sunny and spacious room whose wide-open windows looked out upon the lawn. The newspaper that had just been laid aside, and the freshly gathered blossoms in the center of the table, led to a discussion on the universe in general and on moss-roses in particular. All at once I was startled by the words that I have quoted. They were like a bolt from the blue. They bore no relationship whatever to the conversation in which we were engrossed. Involuntarily, I glanced up in astonishment, only to discover that the eyes of the speaker were fastened on a very youthful and very roguish face at the far end of the table. In that locality a separate debate had been in progress, and had evidently aroused considerable feeling. The countenance upon which John was gazing was pursed and puckered. The significance

of the paternal demand flashed upon me. Almost simultaneously the wrinkles vanished, and a smile monopolized their place. The corrugated iron was gone! After breakfast I sauntered across to the deck-chair under the cypress tree and fell a-thinking.

It is a great thing to be able to dispense with corrugated iron. To begin with, corrugated iron is a very unhealthy thing. George Bancroft, the great American historian, once declared that any man could live to old age if he would undertake, never, under any circumstances, to lose his temper. And, as he himself was over ninety when he made the remark, he is surely entitled to be heard as an authority.

'No corrugated iron!' exclaimed John.

He was quite right. The world would be a healthier place to live in if we could pitch all the corrugated iron into the depths of the sea. For the worst of it is that, if a man insists on covering his house with corrugated iron, he not only imperils his own health, but that of all those unfortunates who are doomed to dwell beneath the same roof with him. I confess with a vast amount of shame that I never grasped the truth of this very obvious conclusion until I read Professor A. W. Momerie's *Origin of Evil*. In a fine chapter entitled 'The Formation of Character,' the learned professor outpours the vials of his most withering scorn on our ridiculous habit of classifying some sins as big sins and other sins as small sins. When I first read Doctor Momerie's chapter, I could scarcely restrain my

laughter at my own crass stupidity. I had always supposed—for the want of thinking about it—that *murder* was the biggest of all sins and that *moodiness* was the most venial. 'Nonsense!' cries the professor, 'sheer arrant nonsense!' And then he proceeds to riddle my easy assumption with the pitiless fire of his unsparing criticism. Murder the biggest sin! he exclaims. How many murders can a man commit? 'He is generally hanged for the first, and there is an end of him. But the sins of temper and of speech and of heart, the sins of unkindness, of unneighborliness, of selfishness, are sins which we can go on committing without fear of punishment, every day, every hour, every moment. The amount of suffering, therefore, which can be inflicted by them is practically infinite.' And then, while I am still staggering under a blow that has ruthlessly shattered all my preconceived notions, the professor takes breath and is at me again.

Am I so entirely alienated from all reasonableness as to fancy that *theft* is a great sin, and *bad temper* a little sin? 'Why,' says the professor, 'suppose that a member of your family, with whom you are compelled to live, is incessantly annoying, incessantly torturing you by his moroseness, by his spitefulness, by his paroxysms of horrible rage—will you say that he is less of a sinner than a pick-pocket?' Here is a poser for me! But the professor has not done with me yet. 'Will you say,' he goes on, 'will you say that the man who has made your

home a very hell is more righteous than the man who has taken away your handkerchief? Why, the misery caused by all the pickpockets in the world, to the whole human race, is less than that inflicted on your single self by the so-called little sins of your relative's detestable temper.' This tremendous sentence, like some high explosive, struck my old easy-going theory full in the face, and I have never been able to find a trace of it from that day to this. I took my professorial castigation with becoming humility. My eyes were opened. And so it came to pass that an American historian taught me that corrugated iron is very bad for my own health. But I should have let it go at that, and should have pursued the subject no further, had not a brilliant Cambridge professor pointed out to me that by the use of corrugated iron I jeopardize the lives of all who dwell beneath my roof.

'No corrugated iron!' exclaimed John Broadbanks. John, as all my readers know by this time, is a very wise man.

Almost as soon as we arrive upon this planet, corrugated iron begins its ministry of misery. We bound into the world asking questions. Childhood is endowed with an infinite capacity for wonder.

I wonder why the grass is green
And why the sky is blue,
I wonder why the Painter should
Have chosen just these two
Instead of all the other ones,
I wonder why—don't you?

The Three Half-Moons

I wonder why the stars are there
 And why they don't fall down,
 And why the moon some night will make
 Queer faces like a clown,
 And when I ask my Nurse these things
Why ever does she frown?

That's the point! *Why ever does Nurse frown?*
 It was with that terrible scowl that Mrs. Pipchin silenced the questionings of poor little Paul Dombey. Miss Margery Lawrence, who has given us the pretty lines that I have quoted, is evidently very much afraid of corrugated iron. She cannot understand it nor can the little people themselves.

I do not understand the world,
 For I am very new;
 I only wish the People saw
 Things from my point of view;
 They must have had their nursery days
 When they were babies too;
 I wonder why they have forgot,
 I wonder why—don't you?

Yes, corrugated iron comes early and stays late. It is with us in childhood, and, unless we pay good heed to John's command, it will be with us in old age. Corrugated iron will turn Paradise into Perdition. Here is a case in point. They had misunderstood each other at the stile—he and she. They parted in silence, *he* crossing the cornfield and *she* sauntering down the lane. It is *she* who tells the story:

And I went homeward to our quaint old farm,
And he went on his way;
And he has never crossed that field again
From that time to this day.

I wonder if he ever gives a thought
To what he left behind—
As I start sometimes, dreaming that I hear
A footstep in the wind.

If he had said but one regretful word,
Or I had shed a tear,
He would not go alone about the world,
Nor I sit lonely here.

Alas! our hearts were full of angry pride,
And love was choked in strife;
And so the stile beyond the yellow grass
Stands straight across our life.

Or, turning from sentimental poetry to severest prose, Mr. A. C. Benson has a tale worth hearing. 'A friend of mine,' he says, 'went to pay a call at the house of a well-known man. He found in the drawing-room his host's wife and her unmarried sister, who lived with them, both gifted, accomplished, and delightful women. They had a very interesting talk. Suddenly the front door below opened and shut rather sharply. A silence fell on the two charming ladies. Presently the sister-in-law excused herself and went out of the room. She came back a few moments later with rather an uneasy smile, and said in an undertone to the wife, "He says he won't have any tea. Perhaps you would just go down and see him." The wife went down,

and remained away for some minutes. She came back and gave a little glance to her sister, who again slipped out of the room, and the conversation continued in rather a half-hearted manner. My friend decided that he had better go, and departed, aware that his departure was a relief. He said to me that it gave him a great sense of depression to think of the constant repetition of similar scenes. The husband was a man of moods, jealous, irritable, self-absorbed; and the sense of his possible displeasure lay like a cloud in the background of the lives of these delightful women.' This is bad enough; but worse follows. For Mr. Benson closes the narrative by remarking that the case is not an uncommon one. In corrugated iron we are badly overstocked.

If only John Broadbanks could have been born when the world was young, and could have been appointed a perpetual dictator among the nations, he might have changed the whole course of the world's history. For nations occasionally sulk, and suffer sadly by sulking. Look at Japan, for example. Early in the seventeenth century, Japan went in for corrugated iron wholesale. She took offense with the world and told it plainly that, in future, she would live her life all by herself. Nobody was to play in her yard. And she kept her word. For more than two hundred years Japan shut herself up. Her ports were sealed. No ships came and no ships sailed. Think of the progress that other nations made between 1636 and 1854; and then think of

what Japan missed through sulking for so long! If only, I repeat, if only John Broadbanks could have appeared at the court of the Mikado early in the seventeenth century, and, looking at those royal lips a-pouting, and that royal brow a-puckered, could have cried in stentorian tones, '*No corrugated iron, O Mightiest Mikado, no corrugated iron!*' what a difference it might easily have made!

If only John had been born still nearer to the dawn of history, he might have saved Saul from his intolerable sullenness. Browning says that when David entered the royal presence with his harp, the king was 'more black than the blackness about him.' Or, again, bursting in upon Achilles, sulking in his tent, John might have scattered the thunders that clouded the hero's brow with gloom. He might even have coaxed the prodigal's brother into a more amiable mood. But it is too late to think about that now. Those who invaded this planet before steam was applied, or electricity discovered, had to pay the penalty in wearisome labor and dreary trudges. And those who, like Saul and Achilles, came into the world too soon must endure the consequences. John's admonition is not for them. We must be thankful that he arrived in time to deliver *us* from disaster. '*No corrugated iron!*' he says; and the wise will take good heed.

They, especially, must pay good heed who are tempted to turn a puckered face to Life herself. Life has plenty of kicks and blows for most of us.

We get cuffed without mercy and whipped without apparent reason. Sickness, accident, disappointment, loss; they come to us, nobody knows quite why. But there is no sense in whining. Mr. Edmund Vance Cook is a sage philosopher. Says he:

You're beaten to earth? Well, well, what's that?
Come up with a smiling face;
It's nothing against you to fall down flat,
But to lie there, that's disgrace.

Oh, a trouble's a ton, or a trouble's an ounce,
Or a trouble's what you make it,
And it isn't the fact that you're hurt that counts,
But only *how did you take it?*

The finest story about corrugated iron, and of a good man's deliverance from its tyranny, is told by Dr. Alexander Whyte in his *James Fraser, Laird of Brea*. Doctor Whyte says that it is told in the Book of the Intricacies of Fraser's Heart and of his Life that his disposition was sullen and his temper peevish. But he was out in his parish visiting his people one day. 'And toward the end of the day he rode his pony up to the door of one of his elders to have a conference with him about some of the people in his district. All the time of the conversation the elder sat fondling a pet dog, to which he paid far more attention than to his minister. And when, toward the end of the interview, his wife came into the room to give them tea, and when she ventured a word or two into the conversation, he turned a look on her, with a snarl, such as some of

you wives have sometimes seen at home. Fraser rode back to his manse that night with some long halts by the way. 'After all my evangelical preaching,' he said to himself, 'and after all our communion seasons together, to see an elder of mine such a brute at home as that!' Till, as his pony sometimes stood still, and sometimes walked slowly, not understanding exactly what her muttering master wanted her to do, Fraser began to see that it was a case of like minister like elder; at any rate, in the matter of mulishness and sullen-heartedness at home. The minister was much later than was his wont in arriving at the manse door that night. But his whole household ever after connected with that late night a great change in the head of the house. And a sermon he preached next Sabbath was so conspicuously blessed to that mulish elder that his household also took immediate remark of this absolute miracle. And, from that hour, James Fraser and his elder entered into newness of life. The minister and his officer gathered up all their corrugated iron, and, together, they threw it all to the scrap-heap.

'No corrugated iron!' said John Broadbanks to the roguish-faced little laddie at the end of the table, and instantly the puckers gave way to smile. I must order a sounding-board to be erected above John's chair, or a microphone to be placed just behind his porridge-plate, so that, when next he utters his curious admonition, the whole wide world shall hear it. And if it acts on the whole wide world as magically

as it acted on my curly-headed little friend, this old planet of ours will be a new place. We shall meet each other on the street at all points of the compass, and at all hours of the day, but every face we meet will glow as if it were looking toward the sunrise.

V

THE SUNNY SIDE OF THE RANGES

LITTLE children are particularly clever in performing the rite of introduction. They introduce us to each other very artlessly, yet very effectively. They do it without bow or simper or grimace; there is never the faintest suspicion of affectation about their behavior; yet they make us known to one another in such a perfectly natural way that we are all smiles at once; and that sort of introduction is the best introduction of all.

A thing of this kind happened only yesterday. I was spending an hour in the Melbourne Art Gallery. Sauntering among the pictures, my attention was arrested by a lady and gentleman whom I somehow felt to be recent arrivals from the Homeland. It is difficult to say how one divines this secret: but the instinct seldom fails. The pair were accompanied by a bonny little fellow of six or seven summers, who devoted all his energies to the task of shepherding his wayward parents. For him, there was only one picture in the gallery, and he saw no sense in allowing them to wander aimlessly among landscapes, portraits, and other unintelligible paintings. He was captivated by Sir John Longstaff's noble representation of the *'Arrival of Burke and Wills and King at*

Cooper's Creek.' The immensity of the canvas, with its lifesize figures, strongly appealed to him. He knew nothing of the story, but the evident wretchedness of the three gaunt and emaciated explorers—one standing, one sitting, and one lying full-length on the sand—awoke his childish sympathy and stirred his boyish fancy. Again and again he dragged his parents from a distant corner of the gallery in order that he might ask them some fresh question concerning Burke and Wills. I quietly took a seat in front of the picture and waited my opportunity. Nor had I long to wait. The three were soon in my vicinity again.

'But what are they doing there, Mum?' the little fellow demanded, his eyes full of deep seriousness, while in his voice was a note touched with solicitude and concern.

'I don't know, sonny,' the mother replied, sadly. 'There ought to be a card or something attached to the picture to tell us all about it.' She spoke with a pronouncedly Somersetshire accent.

'Excuse me,' I said, approaching the party. 'You're recent arrivals in Australia, aren't you?' They smiled assent. 'I should like, if you will let me, to tell this little man the story of the picture. It's a tale of which I am very fond, and one that is written very deeply in the hearts of the Australian people.' They were very kind: the child had done, and done very pleasantly, his work of introduction; and we were soon chatting freely about England, about their

voyage out, about their first impressions of Australia, and so on.

‘But you haven’t told us the story!’ the husband remarked at length, voicing the little fellow’s impatience. I insisted on the lady taking the seat that I had vacated, and then began the recital, the boy edging close up to me that he might not miss a word.

I repeated, in as few words as possible, the sad but stirring narrative of that first crossing of the Australian continent. I described the joyous and confident start from Melbourne, the arrival at Cooper’s Creek, and the establishment of the depot there: and I briefly outlined the reasons that led Burke to divide his party into two sections, leaving Brahe in charge of the detachment at Cooper’s Creek while he, with Wills and King and Gray, made a dash for the far north. The boy’s eyes sparkled as I told of the delight with which the explorers reached the northern shores of the continent, but those eyes soon became dim as I spoke of the discouragements and disasters that dogged the brave men’s steps on the way back. I fancied that I saw a tear when I told of the death of Gray and of the tragic pause of twenty-four hours beside his desert grave. For, as everybody knows, it was for the want of those twenty-four hours that Burke and Wills eventually perished.

‘But,’ I continued, ‘completely worn out and at the point of exhaustion, the three starving men managed to stagger back to Cooper’s Creek, reaching it on a Sunday evening, just as the sun was setting. To

their horror, they found the camp was deserted! Brahe and his men had gone! Carved on the trunk of the gum-tree, as you see in the picture, they read the words, "DIG 3 FEET WEST." They did so. There they found a pit containing provisions and—a *letter*. The letter gave the reasons that had induced Brahe to strike camp and set out for home. The letter was dated *April 21, 1862*: it was on *April 21, 1862*, that they were reading it! Brahe had left that very day! And there, in Sir John Longstaff's picture, you see the three worn men, resting after their terrible ordeal. And now they have to face the new and still more terrible position in which they find themselves! I intended to leave the story there; but the little fellow was relentless.

'And did they ever get home?' he asked, excitedly.

I told him briefly of the deaths in the desert, and of those closing incidents that lend to the story a certain epic grandeur. I advised them, too, to inspect the monument to the explorers that now adorns the city. They thanked me as they shook hands.

'If we stay in Melbourne,' the lady said, 'we shall often come and look at the picture, and think of the wonderful story you have told us. Shan't we, sonny?'

He smiled as he gave me his hand; and, a moment or two later, we had gone our different ways. But several times, since we parted, I have found his boyish question ringing in my ears:

'What are they doing there?'

It is a conundrum. Why should men seek such outlandish spots? Melbourne was a baby-city in 1861: there was abundance of room for everybody, and for countless thousands yet to come. Or, if men preferred a country life, there were, in the areas already opened up, millions of acres aching for population. Why should Burke and Wills leave all this prosperous and fertile territory behind them and go to their deaths in the desert? Why? That is the question. '*What are they doing there?*' as my little friend succinctly puts it.

And the answer to that question is that men do it *because they are men*. Therein lies the essential difference between a man and a beast. A man is fevered with the restlessness of infinity; a beast is content with the green paddocks in which he happens to be grazing. I have read innumerable paragraphs concerning the search for the missing link. Between the formation of the skull of the most highly developed beast and the formation of the skull of the most degraded barbarians, there is, I understand, a distinct difference—a chasm that has never been bridged. What would happen if it *were* bridged—if a skull were found that stood half-way between the one and the other?

It would make not the slightest difference! Man does not consist of *bones*. Nor does a beast. Both man and beast consist of appetites, feelings, desires, emotions, instincts, passions—an inner life that is immensely more grand and immensely more intricate

than is comprehended in a mere matter of skulls. And whatever bones or fossils may come to light in our unborn to-morrows, the fact will always remain that a beast, *just because it is a beast*, is satisfied with the *Here*, while a man, *just because he is a man*, is hungry, desperately hungry, everlastingly hungry, for the distant, the beyond, the *Everywhere!*

In *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, Victor Hugo pokes fun at the Paris crowd that is content to stand staring at a blank wall because it happens to know what is taking place on the other side of the wall. In *Notre Dame* the wall happens to be the wall of a palace: and the people are gazing, in pleasant fancy, at the festival on the other side of the wall. On other occasions a crowd will feast its eyes on the blank wall of a prison, gazing, in grim imagination, at the ghastly details of the execution that is taking place within. Man has a genius for seeing what is on the other side of things. He insists on regarding the Visible as a veil that obstinately conceals from his eyes the Invisible; and he sets to work to tear that veil aside. If there is a hill, he wants to know what is on the other side of the hill; if there is a sea, he must ascertain what is on the other side of the sea; if there is a desert, he will dare a thousand deaths in order to discover what lies beyond the desert. The known may be a perfect Paradise: it does not matter: it is the twinkling lights of the unknown that invariably lure. To him, the *sunny* side of the ranges is always the *other* side of the ranges!

In 1492—the year in which Columbus put to sea—there was plenty of room in Europe! But then—*there rolled the Atlantic!* What was on the other side of the Atlantic? *That* was the question: and, until that haunting riddle had been read, there could, for Columbus, be no rest by day and no sleep by night! And at length the great day dawned on which the redoubtable explorer startled Europe by telling of the new world that he had found beyond the sunset.

But when you assassinate one problem, another comes to its funeral. ‘A new continent beyond the Atlantic!’ men cried in amazement, ‘*and what’s beyond that?*’ What lies on the other side of the new continent?’ In every tap-room and coffee-house and chimney-corner in England the wiseacres of city and hamlet vigorously debated this fresh conundrum. And straightway hardy adventurers began to cross the plains and climb the mountains of the new world in order to find out what lay beyond it. Thus it came to pass that, five and twenty years after the epoch-making adventures of Columbus, Nunez de Balboa,

... with eagle eye
First stared at the Pacific—and all his men
Looked at each other with a wild surmise,
Silent upon a peak in Darien!

Nor was that the end of it. For, as soon as men heard of the Pacific, they asked once more the old question: *What lies beyond it?* And that penetrating and persistent question opened up the era of navigation in which Magellan, Drake, Tasman, Behring,

and Captain Cook covered themselves with glory and gave Australia, New Zealand, and the South Sea Islands to the world.

The Beyond! What lies beyond?

What's beyond the Atlantic? America!

And what's beyond America? The Pacific!

And what's beyond the Pacific? Australia!

And so on and so on! There is no end to it! Whether it be a closed door, or a stone wall, or a range of snow-capped mountains, or a vast expanse of sea, or a dusty desert, man is incessantly tortured by the thought of *the beyond*. Therein lies the true secret of all his pioneering, his pathfinding, his trail-blazing, and his roadmaking.

For Man is a born gipsy. Man and the Road are made for each other. Man and the Road are sweet-hearts: Man and the Road are mates: Man and the Road are wedded: and what God hath joined together let no one put asunder! Neither can live without the other. Without Man the Road would cease to be: the grass would grow over it and it would vanish out of sight. Without the Road, Man would shrivel up and perish. He is too big to be caged and imprisoned in the Here!

The road is his pride and his glory. And, for those who have the eyes to see it, there stands, in the middle of every dusty road, an altar; and on that altar there has been offered a wondrous hecatomb of noble victims, a wealthy holocaust of sacrificial blood. The deaths of men like Burke and Wills and Gray and

Poole and Kennedy and Baxter and Leichhardt have imparted to every Australian highway a solemn sanctity; it has been hallowed by sacrifice: those who tramp along it are treading consecrated dust!

For that reason, a profound spiritual significance underlies Bunyan's choice of the Road as the emblem of the life divine. The preacher exists to point men to the highway and to dare them to life's most glorious and romantic adventure. And, when the preacher points that way, the first object that meets the eye is a Sacrifice—the Sacrifice of the Divine Pathfinder—the most sublime Sacrifice in the history of the ages—the Sacrifice by means of which the trail has been blazed from the misty lowlands of Time to the sunlit altitudes of the Life Eternal!

VI

THE TOPMOST CRAG

I

WE were spending a few days at The Chalet on the slopes of Mount Mystery, up among the Dreadnought Ranges. The scenery on every hand is so wild and so rugged as to be almost terrible. It is one of the grandest, yet one of the loneliest, spots south of the Equator. The gigantic mountains rise with perpendicular abruptness from the blue, blue waters of Lake Columbine. When Sunday came, we thought of the services being conducted in city and settlement miles and miles away; but there could be no service for us. We decided to walk up the gorge to the Dreadnought Falls.

The sun was shining dazzlingly upon the snow-clad summits far above us; and the birds in the bush on either hand were rendering a wild and rapturous anthem of their own. The valley was a riot of giant tree-ferns; and only those who have seen the delicate tracteries of their myriad fronds glorified by the soft sunshine of a summer's morning can imagine the beauty of the spectacle that we beheld at every turn. The murmur of the waterfall became more and more pronounced as, with leisurely footsteps, we approached it. In the distance, it is a muffled roar like

the roar of the breakers on the bar; but, as we draw nearer, the silvery plash of dripping water mingles with the deeper music. Then, emerging suddenly from the dense tangle of forestry through which, for several moments, we have been threading our way, we come all at once within sight of the Falls. Account for it how you may, I always bared my head on reaching that point. The action was as instinctive and involuntary as it would have been in entering a church.

Indeed, the Dreadnought Falls often reminded me of some glorious cathedral. They consisted of two tiers: the upper one not unlike a spire and the lower one resembling the noble fane itself. In its first descent, the water, in one vast column, comes tumbling down from a terrific height above, casting up huge clouds of silver spray upon which a score of rainbows sparkle. Then, spreading itself out over a broad shelf of rocks, it makes its second plunge. But, this time, it is so widely and evenly distributed that the outspread screen of water looks as soft and delicate as a bridal veil. The beauty of the whole stands exquisitely framed in an interminable expanse of evergreen bush. Even the rocks over which the waters fall are clothed from base to summit with an unbroken drapery of mosses and ferns. We found a fallen tree on the sunlit slope, and, seating ourselves there, with the loud monotone of the Falls in our ears, we prepared to listen to a nobler music still.

‘It must be just about eleven o’clock,’ my com-

panion remarked. 'We must have *our* service here this morning.'

I drew from my vest-pocket a tiny Psalter and began to read. It chanced to be the sixty-first Psalm: *From the end of the earth will I cry unto Thee,*' I began. It seemed singularly appropriate. If the earth has an end, we seemed to have reached it. *'From the end of the earth will I cry unto Thee: lead me to the Rock that is higher than I.'*

'What does *that* mean?' my companion inquired; 'what is *the Rock that is higher than I?*' I confessed that my ideas on the subject were somewhat hazy. We discussed the alluring phrase for a while, hazard-ing in quick succession an infinite variety of startling original conjectures. Most of these impromptu expositions would have caused the theologians to pucker their brows; but we were far enough from the halls of divinity to defy their reverberating thunders. We came to an end of our resources at last.

'Ah, well,' my companion observed, as she rose in preparation for our return journey, 'we've found a text for you to preach on when you get back; so our little service at the Falls has not been altogether fruitless, has it?'

And as a consequence of that practical and essentially womanly remark, here I am in my own study, preparing as best I can to expound that text next Sunday. *From the end of the earth will I cry unto Thee: lead me to the Rock that is higher than I!*

II

Higher than I! As we sat there that lovely Sunday morning, with the towering summits looking down upon us from every point of the compass, the Psalmist's standard of altitude seemed so absurdly inadequate! *Higher than I!* The snow-capped and sky-piercing heights around made us feel how pitifully puny we were. If only the Psalmist had said: 'higher than the mountains!' But *higher than I!* There lay the problem! And, circumstanced as we were, it was difficult to find its solution. But, sitting in this quiet study of mine to-day, I can see that we were tyrannized by our environment. The mountains overawed us. The more I think about it, the more convinced I become that the Psalmist is right, and that we were wrong. If I want to speak of the loftiest altitude, the highest summit, the topmost crag, I must speak, not of the Rock that is higher than the virgin peaks, but of the *Rock that is higher than I*. Higher even *than I!*

We grow upon ourselves. A little child thinks everything colossal but himself. He despises his own diminutive stature. The height of his ambition is 'to be big like father.' He feels himself to be a pigmy in the midst of Titans. Every object seems tremendous: every person appears gigantic. As a small boy, I attended a church with a spire. I could never stand in the street below and look steadfastly up to the weather-vane at the top. I felt giddy: my

brain reeled : and I was overtaken by a feeling of sickness. And, at night, I often dreamed that I was falling from that dizzy height, plunging through an interminable ocean of space, yet never, by any chance, reaching the ground. Fascinated by the very object that appalled me, I sometimes glanced furtively upwards ; and, whenever I did so, the lightning-conductor seemed to me to pierce the very skies. I remember wondering whether it penetrated the floor of heaven and got in the way of the angels. I have frequently visited the church since, and have been astonished at its moderate altitude. The church has not altered ; but I have grown. And, more important still, I have, in growing, grown upon myself. Mere growth would not, in itself, account for my changed emotions : I am only two or three feet taller now than I was then : it is not those few inches that have made the difference. But, with the years, I have grown *in my own esteem*. I know myself to be incomparably bigger than I then considered myself. In those days, the steeple seemed like the Tower of Babel, reaching unto heaven, and I seemed like an insect crawling round its base. Now—to some extent at least—I know myself for what I am : the poor little steeple has dwindled into the veriest trifle ; I look down upon it with a disdain that is almost contempt.

Now a child is rapidly leaving his infancy behind him when he begins to look down upon steeples. And I am approaching the full stature of maturity

when I begin to talk about life's supernal eminences as being *higher than I*. An immature person would never dream of employing such a standard of altitude. A child would say 'higher than the house' or 'higher than the steeple.' A youth would say 'higher than the mountains' or 'higher than the stars.' Only a man who knows the immeasurable immensity of man would take *himself* as the utmost limit of loftiness. '*Higher than I!*' he says, '*Higher even than I!* *Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I!*'

A man has really begun to grow when he realizes that he himself is, quite easily, the biggest thing in the universe. Indeed, he is not only the biggest thing in the universe; he is bigger far than the universe itself. Dr. Watts realized that. Said he:

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul—

The universe far too small! The soul the only offering large enough! Pascal taught us the same lesson. 'Man is,' he says, 'a feeble reed, trembling in the midst of creation. But then he is endowed with thought. It does not need the universe to arm for his destruction. A breath of wind, a drop of water will suffice to kill him. But, though the universe were to fall on man and crush him, *he* would be greater in his death than *the universe* in its victory for *he* would be conscious of his defeat, while *it* would not be conscious of its triumph.' To be

sure! I very well remember, in the days to which I have already referred, hurrying home from school one day to tell my mother that the sun was a million times as big as the whole world! Teacher said so! The assertion seemed amazing, prodigious, incredible! For weeks afterwards, the sense of the sun's incomprehensible vastness appalled me. I talked of nothing else. Indeed, my conversation was confined so exclusively to the immensity of the sun that I acquired a bubble reputation for astronomical research. Incidentally this reputation involved me in painful consequences. For, on Prize Day, while other boys walked off with *Robinson Crusoe*, *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, *The Pathfinder* and similar treasures, I was gravely presented, two years running, with ponderous volumes on astronomy! I began to rebel against the sun's frightful bulk; I wished that I had never heard of it or spoken of it; and, to make matters worse, I have since discovered that its alleged bigness is purely a myth.

The sun has suffered the same fate as the steeple. I suppose it is still a million times as big as the earth; but that portentous fact no longer impresses me. *It* may be a million times as big as the earth; but *I* am a million times as big as *it*. I have grown upon myself; and *it* has dwindled in consequence. Between me and the sun there is no comparison at all. The sun does not know that it is the sun, and it does not know that the moon is the moon. The moon does not know that it is the moon, and it does not know that the sun

is the sun. I am I; I know that I am I; and I know that you are you. That distinction stamps me as being greater, by whole infinitudes, than the entire solar system with all its baggage and belongings. The difference between you and me is infinitely greater than the difference between Mercury and Jupiter. They differ only in bulk—mere *avoir-du-pois*: while you and I differ vitally and differ to all eternity.

When a man has grown upon himself to this extent, he will never again be satisfied with any secondary symbol of sublimity. He will not talk of a thing as being higher than the house or higher than the steeple or higher than the mountains or higher than the stars. He will find in his own person the most stately, and the only satisfying, emblem of immensity. *Lead me*, he will cry, *lead me to the Rock that is higher than I!*

Growth is a mark of health. It is well with a man when he has so grown upon himself that he feels himself to be incomparably bigger than anything about him. A man who has low thoughts of himself is likely to live a low life. Why should he attempt a high one? If I regard myself as being about six feet high, I shall be content to live a six-foot life and to go down at last to a six-foot grave. But if I think of myself as striding through immensity, with solar systems circling about my ankles, and my head in eternity, I shall feel myself to be trampling on the poor little houses, the poor little steeples, the poor

little mountains, and the poor little stars; and I shall say: *Higher than I! Higher than I! Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I!* The man who thinks of the universe as mere dust and ashes as compared with his own immeasurable personality will feel it an unthinkable desecration to degrade the boundless potentialities of his wondrous being by harnessing them to unworthy or ignoble ends.

III

But there is another side to all this. For if, on the one hand, it is good that a man should feel himself to be immensely bigger than anything about him, it is essential, on the other, that he should realize that he needs something immensely greater than himself. High as he is, there is something higher. *Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I!* The man who has an exalted conception of himself, but no conception of anything higher than himself, will quickly lose his way. He lacks balance. He must inevitably become self-centered, conceited, arrogant, vain. To develop a well-poised character, a man needs, on the one hand, a vision of his own sublimity, and, on the other, a vision of *the Rock that is higher*. Not merely as high, but *higher!* If that Rock stands out on his horizon as merely one among many, he will be a man of a small religion and a paltry soul. Religion will have a place in his life, but it will not be a supreme or dominant place. Religion will stand side by side with Commerce, Friendship, Pleasure, and other big

things. But, big as they are, none of these are as big as himself. He can hold them or drop them at will; and the fact that he can hold them or drop them at will proves conclusively that he is bigger than they. In that case, the Rock to which he clings is a Rock that is no higher than he is. A six-foot religion—a religion that is not more than a mere six feet high—is of no use to any man.

Indeed, it is worse than useless. A Rock that is no higher than I am will do me more harm than good. The man who, consciously or unconsciously, looks *down* upon his religion, or confronts it on equal terms, pays the inevitable penalty. He adopts an attitude of patronage; he puts on airs: he would be infinitely more lovable if he had no religion at all. Thinking of his religion as on the same plane with his business or his pleasure, he naturally plumes himself on all that he does for it or gives to it. His religion is his subordinate, or, at best, his equal.

To see life steadily and see it whole, a man must look *up* to the Rock that towers above as well as look *down* at the stars around his feet. Religion must appall me by its unutterable grandeur. It must appear majestic, transcendent, sublime. *Lead me*, I must cry, *lead me to the Rock that is higher than I!*

IV

It is good for a man *to feel that he is bigger than creation*; it is good for a man *to revere something higher than himself*; and it is good for a man *to*

aspire to something beyond the limits of experience. The rock of the Psalmist's desire is one on which he has never yet planted his feet. He is eager for a height that he has never yet scaled. '*Lead me to it!*' he prays: '*Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I!*' Most of us hanker after antiquated joys: we long for exhausted raptures: we sigh for worn-out ecstasies: we crave to be permitted to quaff once more the cup that we sipped with delight in our golden yesterdays. Our aspirations are all *within* the limits of experience. It does not occur to us to turn our faces toward the unexplored. The text that we discussed at the Dreadnought Falls has taught me to look for my fullest satisfaction *beyond* the limits of my experience and to give glory to God for all the grace I have not tasted yet.

VII

A SAXON PRINCESS

I

WHO would have looked for a visitor on such a morning? A steady drizzle had been falling for hours. Clouds of white mist drifted across the Plain, entirely obscuring the surrounding hills. The path to the Manse was a quagmire of soft clay: everything looked sodden, muddy, cheerless. As I entered the study, glorified as it was by the blaze and crackle of a roaring fire, I congratulated myself on the prospect of an hour or two without a single interruption. I had scarcely settled down to work, however, when I was startled by the click of the gate, and, glancing up, saw Phyllis Nimmo making her way to the front door. Phyllis was one of our best workers in the church and one of the finest tennis players on the Taieri Plain. She was known on the courts as the Saxon Princess. She had an extraordinary wealth of the fairest possible hair; extremely pale blue eyes; and a tall, stately, athletic figure. On the edge of the veranda she divested herself of her muddy goloshes, and, stepping out to welcome her, I relieved her of her shining mackintosh and dripping umbrella.

‘Why, Phyllis,’ I exclaimed, leading her into the

study, 'what in the world brings you out on such a morning?' I rather suspect that Phyllis enjoyed being abroad under such conditions.

'Well,' she laughed, brushing back her tumbled tresses with her left hand, as she settled herself in the armchair opposite mine, 'I came to see you about a letter that I received this morning from Mr. Livingstone. Mr. Livingstone—Douglas, you know—is the Presbyterian Home Missionary at Dusty Point. He's very anxious that you should go up there and lecture in connection with his anniversary. He only settled there last year: it's his first charge; he's very anxious about it, and it would mean so much to him if you could manage to go. Do you think it's possible?'

'Well,' I replied, 'that depends a good deal upon the date. But before we go into that, Phyllis,' I demanded, 'tell me what business this is of yours. What have you to do with Mr. Livingstone, or Dusty Point, or Presbyterian Home Missions, or anything else?'

She blushed profusely, and I understood. 'Douglas and I have been great friends for years,' she explained, 'and he says that if you consent to go, he will come and arrange all particulars when he comes to town for the meetings of the Assembly.'

Having set Phyllis's mind at rest on the main issue, I expressed my pleasure that Douglas Livingstone was coming to town (solely, of course, to attend the meetings of the Presbyterian Assembly)

and I added a pious hope that she herself would derive some pleasure and profit from the impressive debates of Assembly Week. Whereat, for some unaccountable reason, Phyllis blushed again; and, not long afterwards, plunged once more into the drizzle.

II

It was not to be, however. At least, it was not to be for a long time to come. In accordance with his promise, Douglas Livingstone called at the Manse during Assembly Week and completed arrangements for my visit to Dusty Point. By this time my interest was thoroughly aroused, and I was looking forward to the outing.

'You'll have no trouble at all,' Douglas assured me. 'You just take the train to Milton. I'll meet you there and drive you all the way.'

Just as the great day was approaching, however, the death of one of the officers of the little church necessitated the postponement of the anniversary; the altered date was impossible to me, and I could only promise that I would fulfill my engagement the following year.

When next the anniversary came round, however, I was in England, so that more than two years intervened between Phyllis's call at the Manse on that drizzling morning and my actual visit to Dusty Point. By this time Phyllis and Douglas had been some time married, and I found comfort in the reflection that I should be compensated for the long

delay by the gratification of seeing them cosily ensconced in their new home. But once more, as I shall show in due time, the fates were against me.

On the day of the anniversary I caught the train that left Mosgiel at nine forty-two, and was at Milton an hour and half later. There my responsibility ended. 'I'll meet you at Milton and drive you all the way,' Douglas had said; and I was content to leave it at that. It did not occur to me to inquire as to the distance from the station; it might be five miles, it might be fifty: it was no business of mine.

It was a day in a thousand—one of those sparkling summer days that sometimes surprise us in early spring. I remember seeing the first lambs of the season on a green hillside near the road. I admired their temerity in making so early an appearance and expressed the hope that they would not live to regret their haste. It was just the day for a long country drive, and we both enjoyed it to the full. After jogging along for an hour or two, Douglas pulled up by the side of the road and proceeded to prepare an *al fresco* meal. While the billy was coming to the boil, he took a hamper from under the seat of the spring-cart and produced a bountiful supply of cold chicken, scones, cakes, fruit, and I know not what other delicacies. Dusty Point, I said to myself, is evidently a long way: he does not expect to reach it for some time. Our lunch disposed of, we set out again. At four o'clock we

called at a roomy and hospitable farmhouse and were regaled with afternoon-tea.

'If I were you,' Douglas whispered, as we entered the capacious kitchen, 'I'd make a meal of this. We're behind time; and I'm afraid you won't get anything else to eat until after the lecture. We've a good way to go yet.'

I took the hint and was grateful afterwards that he had given it. As dusk was falling, we began to ascend a long, tedious chain of hills, and it was half-past seven before we eventually caught sight of the twinkling lights of Dusty Point. I was announced to lecture there at eight o'clock.

III

We arrived just in time. The schoolhouse was crowded. Farmers had driven in from far and near. The place was in a buzz and a flutter. Young people, divided into knots and groups, were chatting and laughing boisterously. Farmers—who seem to represent the one trade that has no trade secrets—were exchanging experiences concerning crops and cattle, while their wives, unwilling to be outdone by the husbands and children, had also found themes for engrossing conversation. Even the dogs, as they frisked about among the buggies and the tired horses, seemed excited at meeting each other again. The arrangement of the program occupied some little time: there was an imposing array of vocal and instrumental items: and then it took a few minutes

to persuade the people to take their seats. An anniversary service in the outback is one of those sublime events into which considerations of time do not enter. People who have not seen each other's faces for months have met at last: there are no trains to catch: why hurry? It was half-past eight before we got a start; and it was more than an hour later before I was called upon for my lecture. I suggested that I should abbreviate it, condensing an utterance that usually occupied an hour and a half into about three-quarters of an hour. But Douglas assured me, and with evident sincerity, that such a proceeding would sadly disappoint many who had come long distances to hear me: he begged me to delete no single word. The people listened to the end with amazing fortitude; and, if they felt the strain, the exhaustion was soon forgotten under the reviving influence of a coffee supper.

Douglas and I were the last to leave. He felt it his duty to say good-night to all his people, and so it was some time after the meeting closed before we began to think seriously of our own departure.

'I've arranged,' he explained, when we were at length left to ourselves, 'I've arranged to take you to the Todds' for the night. We had always looked forward to having you at the Manse; but, as I told you coming along, Phyllis is away in town: I am bachelorizing, and I think you'll be more comfortable at the farm. I've promised to stay the night, too; so we'll get along.'

The night was clear and frosty: the moon was well up: and we could hear in the distance the rattle of many wheels and the barking of many dogs. I had somehow taken it for granted that the Todds' farm would be back in the direction from which we had come; but I found that it was three miles farther on!

'I'm afraid you'll be late to bed to-night,' Douglas observed, as we jogged along the endless road, watching the rabbits scurrying hither and thither in the moonlight. 'An anniversary, you see, comes but once a year, and nobody feels inclined to hurry it through. But the Todds were among the first to leave; and I expect supper will be ready by the time we arrive.'

'Supper!' I protested, 'why, we've just had supper! How many more suppers are we expected to devour?'

I found that he was right. As I entered the enormous room, in which a sumptuous meal was spread, I tried not to notice that the big clock on the mantelpiece was just about to strike twelve. Two or three families who lived still farther along the road had broken the journey at the Todd farmhouse. It would save time, Mrs. Todd argued, a trifle casuistically, since they would be spared the trouble of getting supper at their own establishments. My plea—when a huge plate of chicken and ham was placed before me—that I had just had supper, was dismissed with contempt. A cup of coffee and a sand-

wich was no supper; and, besides, when had I had tea? Douglas had evidently been telling tales out of school, and my genial hostess was able to secure a dialectic triumph over me in consequence.

Despite their coffee and sandwiches at the school-house, the farmers had noble appetites. We soon forgot our weariness, forgot the clock on the mantelpiece, forgot everything but the enjoyments of the moment. Story followed story: the place rang with peal after peal of boisterous laughter; and time had ceased to become a serious consideration. At length, one of the farmers' wives, a motherly body, remarked that I was looking dreadfully tired: the others took the hint and the party broke up.

IV

As soon as the guests had vanished, our candles were brought. Mrs. Todd showed us to our room. The two beds were in opposite corners. Everything looked wonderfully clean, restful, and inviting. A fire had evidently been burning for hours in the grate.

'Don't hurry up in the morning,' our hostess urged, considerately. 'We can have breakfast any time. Get up just when you feel like it.'

I thanked her. 'I'm afraid,' I added, 'that I shall have to rise fairly early to catch my train. What time,' I asked, turning to Douglas, 'shall we have to start?' A look of astonishment came to his sleepy eyes.

'What train do you want to catch?' he demanded anxiously.

'There is but one,' I replied. 'I have a wedding at Mosgiel to-morrow afternoon, and the only train that will get me there in time leaves Milton at eight-fifty.'

'Eight-fifty!' Douglas gasped, looking at the watch that he had been absentmindedly winding, and doing some feverish mental arithmetic; ' . . . why, man, if you really *must* catch the eight-fifty, we'll have to start now!'

We looked wistfully at the snow-white beds, at the glowing embers, and at the other preparations for a long night's repose. But such luxuries were not for us.

Douglas, breathing no benedictions on the heads of my Mosgiel bride and bridegroom, went off to arrange with Mr. Todd for the loan of a horse that was less exhausted than his own; Mrs. Todd and her daughter set to work to pack his hamper with an appetizing breakfast, and, within an hour of supper-time, we were once more upon the road.

I suspect that, in the course of that long drive to Milton, we both nodded at times. There was little danger. The moon was so bright that every stick and stone cast a clear-cut shadow. The horse could not possibly mistake the road, and there was no likelihood of our meeting vehicles coming the other way. The greatest discomfort was the icy cold. I remember, on rising once to stretch my limbs, hear-

ing my coat crackle crisply as I broke the frozen creases.

It was an eerie experience. I recall the sense of relief with which we saw a man with a lantern moving about the stables of a farm; the world seemed to have come to life again when we at length met a dray upon the road; and then, as the great red sun came creeping over the hills, we decided to give the horse a rest, light another gipsy-fire, and examine the contents of Mrs. Todd's hamper.

We had a quarter of an hour to spare when we drove up to the Milton station. The stationmaster, knowing that we must have spent the night in the spring-cart, greeted us with exclamations of surprise. Then he suddenly remembered something.

'Oh,' he remarked, turning to Douglas, 'there's a telegram for you! It came just as the office was closing last night. There was no way of sending it; and we understood that you'd be coming in to-day.' He went into the office and soon reappeared with the buff envelope in his hand. I watched Douglas's face anxiously as he tore it open.

'By Jove!' he murmured, excitedly, 'this is worth an all-night drive! I'm jolly glad you had to catch this train! It's a boy, and they're both doing well! We'll name the little beggar after you; you see if we don't!'

And, surely enough, they did! But, lest I should be exalted above measure by so marked a distinction, fate toned it down a little. The boy is never called

by his real name. He inherited his mother's fair hair; and his schoolfellows, in the autocratic fashion peculiar to their species, ordained that his name should be Snowy. 'My Saxon Prince,' Douglas always calls him, with a thought of Phyllis's earlier sobriquet. Douglas is now the minister of an important city charge, greatly loved and greatly honored. I have spent some delightful hours in his Manse. Phyllis is wonderfully proud of him, as she has every right to be. And whenever the conversation at table knows a lull, Snowy is sure to secure its revival by asking to be told once more the story of our long, long drive on the day of his nativity.

VIII

THE CLOCKWORK MOUSE

I SHALL never forget that Christmas morning as long as I live. I spent half of it laughing and half of it crying. The ecstasy of the *first* half was simply delirious as long as it lasted; and the grief of the *second* half was proportionately poignant. It all arose from the fact that an intelligent uncle, with remarkable insight into the intricacies of boy-nature, had presented me on rising with a clockwork mouse. My other presents—many of them much more valuable—were treated with cold disdain. The clockwork mouse was the thing! For an hour or two I persisted, without a moment's intermission, in winding it up and letting it loose. We are all persecutors and inquisitors at heart; the savage sleeps just under the skin; we glory in our prerogative of torture. How I revelled in the paroxysms of terror into which I was able to throw my lady friends! Their shrieks were music in my ears. For an hour or two my bliss was intoxicating, my joy unalloyed. A merry Christmas, indeed! Was ever merriment like this? Then, however, there supervened a lull. Perhaps the ladies went to church or were busy with the dinner. At any rate, my furious glee summered down. I had time to think. My reason awoke and

began to ask questions. The sage within me asserted his superiority over the savage; my philosophy conquered my ferocity. I picked up my mouse and had a good look at it. How did it work? What made it run about the floor whenever I was pleased to wind it up? Curiosity became the dominant passion of my soul, and I crept off to my own room to investigate these problems more carefully. I sat down in the corner and took my mouse to pieces. The spring came out with a whir-r-r; the little brass wheels lay in confusion on the floor; the furry exterior of the disembowelled mouse lay like a dead thing in my hand. It was stiff and cold and lifeless. I tried to put the pieces together again; but it was useless; the fragments would not fit. With my own hands I had destroyed my treasure! I had murdered the mouse that had afforded me such boundless delight! I dropped the furry shell upon the floor, buried my face in my hands and wept! Later in the day I attempted to console myself with the other presents that Santa Claus and his fellow-conspirators had brought me; but the expedient was only partially successful. None of these gifts could fill the aching void. The tragedy of the clockwork-mouse darkened the whole of that memorable Christmas.

Now, with a gloomy record of this kind stowed away among the pigeon-holes of memory, it might be supposed that I had abandoned for ever the diversion of taking things to pieces. Not a bit of it! I

am going to try my hand at it again to-day. 'A merry Christmas!' we say: and we find a certain merriment in saying it. There is a vague consciousness of Christmas in the air as the festive season approaches. There is a feeling of Christmas everywhere. Why would we not sit down in the corner and take *it* to pieces! It is a capital idea! Let us roll up our sleeves and get to work!

And almost as soon as we venture upon this delicate business of dissection, one ingredient unmistakably asserts itself. Quite clearly, one of the most important factors in the composition of the Christmas spirit is the element of contagion. There is always a peculiar satisfaction in doing what everybody else is doing. We are gregarious animals; we go in packs; we unconsciously stimulate each other to joy and sorrow, to admiration and execration, to emotion and excitement. The most solitary man cannot walk through a public park on a bank-holiday in exactly the same temper in which he would traverse it on any other day of the year. The laughter of the children, the hum of the crowd, and the shouts of the people at their play, make their irresistible appeal to him. In spite of himself, he is influenced by the holiday air and catches something of the spirit of the thing. Pleasure is highly infectious. A London theatre-goer made this discovery recently in rather a curious way. Having time on his hands, and being specially anxious to secure a good seat, he arrived one evening at his favorite picture-show

much too soon. He found himself alone in the building. The operator was testing his machine. He switched on a comedy of the more boisterous kind; but the solitary observer found to his astonishment that he had not the slightest inclination to laugh. 'Laughter,' he observes, in telling the story of his strange experience, 'is something which must be shared to be properly enjoyed. That is why nine men out of ten, when they read something amusing, feel that they must read it aloud to somebody else. A man who sees something funny in the street when alone will conceal his sensations; but if he is with a friend, or if other people are laughing, he will roar with merriment also. When, later in the evening, the theatre crowded and the same film was shown again, the place rocked with boisterous glee, and, in the universal outburst, I heartily joined.' Harold Fortescue says that when, on November 11, 1918, he heard that the Armistice had been signed, he felt perfectly calm. He was sitting in his library; he had been expecting the news; he was glad that it had come; and that is as far as his emotions would go. But when, half an hour later, he went out on to the street, he felt a sense of delirious ecstasy; he marched up and down with the procession; threw up his hat when the people cheered; and even helped some small boys to let off fireworks!

All phases of human emotion are governed by the same law. I remember, many years ago, spending a holiday in Melbourne—the city in which I now re-

side. The cinematograph was then a novelty, and, of an evening, I frequently turned aside for an hour to enjoy it. One night, a picture was thrown upon the screen depicting a little girl who, in gathering shells from the rocks, did not notice that the tide was rapidly cutting off her retreat. At last she was entirely surrounded. Her dog ran to and fro, in terrible distress at the plight and peril of his young mistress, but unable to help her. At length an idea occurred to him. He bounded off home; rushed into the stable, and led out the girl's pony. The scene in which the dog guides the pony through the waves to the girl was very beautiful. But there were not enough people in the place to show any enthusiasm. The film passed in silence. I thought it pretty—and that was all. A few nights later, under very similar circumstances, I saw the picture again. But this time it bored me. I knew exactly what was coming: the sense of repetition palled upon me; and I was glad when it had passed. On a Saturday evening, a week or two later, I once more visited the pictures, taking two of the children with me. This time the vast auditorium was crowded and it was difficult to find seats. When I glanced down the program I saw, to my disgust, that I was in for a third dose of the pony film. When the title flickered on to the screen, I leaned back, folded my arms, and prepared to display what patience I possessed. But I had forgotten the crowd; and the crowd made all the difference. I was stirred by the murmurs of admiration,

the exclamations of pity, the indications of alarm, and the thunders of applause. When the dog dashed into the stable, the air was electric with subdued excitement; and when, led by the dog, the pony waded out to the wave-washed rocks, the enthusiasm knew no bounds. And, explain it how you may, I watched with tears in my eyes the return through the surf, the ride up the hill, and the welcome at the great hall-door. I had seen it all before and had seen it without emotion. I discovered that it is one thing to enjoy a spectacle; and quite another thing to multiply the enjoyment by sharing it. The discovery helps me to understand the charm of Christmas-time. At this season of the year we are all thinking the same thoughts; we are all cherishing the same sentiments; we are all luxuriating in the same delights. *We are members one of another*; we are caught in the general whirl; we are swept off our feet by the contagion of the crowd.

Then, again, Christmas brings us, in a way that nothing else does, the exquisite bliss of choosing. We have made up our minds to spend money, and to spend it unselfishly; the only question is: What shall we buy? Faced by this perplexity, the shop-windows acquire a sudden and unwonted fascination, even for the most prosaic spirits. All through the year, these matter-of-fact souls regard the blandishments of the windows pretty much as a shrewd and discerning mouse may be supposed to regard the too-conspicuous cheese; they hurry by without so

much as a glance. But in December it is different. In December they approach the bait without fear. They want to be caught. In December we all become the ardent disciples of Mr. and Mrs. Boffin. Before the days of their affluence dawned, it will be remembered, that excellent couple always took their walks in London on Sundays and whenever the shops were shut. But afterwards, when they had lots and lots of money to spend, they derived an enjoyment from the variety and fancy and beauty of the display in the windows which seemed incapable of exhaustion. 'As if the principal streets were a great theatre, and the play were childishly new to them, Mr. and Mrs. Boffin were constantly in the front row, charmed with all they saw, and applauding vigorously.' We may grow tired of it, as we may grow weary of any pastime. The last purchase having been made, we heave a sigh of relief and are thankful that it is all over, and yet, for awhile, there are few delights that can hold a candle to this one. We are born choosers: we love nothing better than to have a variety of things submitted to our taste and placed at the mercy of our selection. At Christmastime this propensity of ours is gratified on a truly noble scale. On three hundred and sixty-four days of the year we either avoid the shops altogether or seek them under the pressure of necessity. In the latter case we know what we want before we enter. The issue is simple. Shall we buy a hat of *this* style or a hat of *that*? Shall it be a carpet of *this*

pattern or a carpet of *that* one? Do we prefer a copy of Shakespeare in *this* edition or in that more expensive binding? Having previously made up our minds that we are seeking a hat or a carpet or a Shakespeare, the field of choice is decidedly restricted. But on Christmas Eve we do not know what we want. The range of selection is extended indefinitely. We scan the shop-windows in search of suggestions. It is not a question of style or that; this pattern or that; this edition or that; it is a question of the thing itself.

Moreover, like a cloud of sparrows rising from the corn at the sound of a football in the field, a multitude of psychological considerations confront us. For an instance of this, we need not wander beyond the shop-windows. As we elbow our way through the crowded streets on Christmas Eve, and abandon ourselves without reserve to the cajolery of the tradesmen, it is clear that the mind sees much more than the eye sees. No screen ever presented so many pictures in an hour as a mother sees as she peers into those gaily illuminated shop-fronts. To every object that meets the eye, the mind gives a vivid and picturesque setting. The *eye* of the mother sees a doll; the *mind* sees the doll, dressed by her own hands, reposing on the lap of her own little daughter at home. The *eye* sees a top; the *mind* sees her boy actually spinning it. The *eye* sees a blouse, prettily exhibited; the *mind* sees her elder daughter proudly wearing it amidst a circle of admiring friends. And

so on, *ad infinitum*. By a resistless and entrancing psychological process, the mind insists on removing every object from the shop-window and placing it in the midst of that familiar domestic environment, every tiniest detail of which is the object of such yearning fondness, such anxious thought, and such constant solicitude.

Then, too, a very large proportion of our Christmastide felicity springs from the faculty which we develop, at this season of the year, for projecting our imaginations into the thoughts, tastes and habits of each other. On Christmas Eve it is our duty to defy the Golden Rule. I must not do unto others as I would that they should do to me. In selecting a present, the supreme question is not: 'What should *I* like to have given to me?' but 'What would *he* like to have given to him?' The giver assumes for the time being the peculiarities, partialities, and propensities of the prospective recipient; he probably selects a present to which he himself would scarcely give house-room; but it has been an enjoyable and, perhaps, a profitable exercise to think his way into his friend's thought and to see the matter from his friend's point of view. At Christmas-time we acquire the habit of regarding each other in quite a new light. In the course of the year we assume certain fixed relationships to one another. A man thinks of his companion as a solicitor, or as a politician, or as a golfer, or in some other equally definite and equally circumscribed way. He is in danger

of forgetting that, of the entire circumference of his friend's life, the fragment that he habitually views is, after all, only a microscopic and insignificant segment. But, when he is confronted by the problem of a present, he is compelled to inspect every section of the circle. His imagination takes its flight into unaccustomed fields. He dispatches his thought on voyages of exploration. He delves into matters of the toilet, matters of the palate, matters of the wardrobe; and he surveys his friend in a light in which he had never before beheld him. He recognizes, with something like a start, that the solicitor is much more than a solicitor, the politician much more than a politician, the golfer much more than a golfer. Half the pleasure with which a young lady presents her fiancé with a shaving-set, or with which *he* offers a dressing-case for her acceptance, arises from the romance of invading a realm of fancy into which neither had previously entered. Has not Mr. E. V. Lucas suggested that, in the course of their education, children should be taught to play a game in which they assume, in rotation, the part of an afflicted person? Thus, for one hour, a certain child should be blindfolded, and the others should lead him about and help him as though he were really blind. Another should, on the following day, have his arms bound up; another his legs; and so on. By this means, Mr. Lucas maintains, the children would learn in turn to realize the condition of those who are really afflicted; while the constant discipline of

helpfulness would render them quick to assist those in actual need. At Christmas-time we all play, on a small scale, some such game as this. We think our way into each other's minds and see life through each other's glasses.

But see, the tragedy of the clockwork mouse has been repeated! I have taken the Christmas sentiment to pieces! See how the parts lie scattered on the floor! Can they ever be put together again? I am not alarmed. For as, with pitiless fingers, I took it all to pieces, a wonderful secret was singing itself over and over again within my soul. A magic sleeps in Christmas-time such as clockwork mice can never know. Let the dawn of Christmas Day steal up over the eastern hills; let the bells ring out the old, old peals; let the choir repeat the old, old carols; let the people murmur the old, old wishes; let the children play the old, old games; and lo, the miracle of Ezekiel's vision will be seen on earth once more! Like the dead bones in the valley, these scattered fragments on the floor will rush together, part to his part; and there, in the midst of us, Christmas will stand again, radiant and beautiful, as though no meddling fingers of mine had ever dared to touch him!

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The three half-moons
and other essays

